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WORDS OF A FRIEND

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ON THE

FOUNDATION, DIFFICULTIES, HELPS,
AND TRIUMPHS

OF A

RELIGIOUS LIFE.

BY

REV. HENRY A. MILES, D. D.

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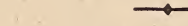
PREFACE.



This book contains a few practical sermons, taken from the traditional barrel which has been filled and turned over in a professional service of forty years; and if any, through a personal interest in the author, should read these discourses, he hopes that a unity of purpose will be seen in them, although they were written at different times, and amid the diversified circumstances of ordinary pulpit duty.

Following a view of the basis on which all religion rests, a glance is given to the invitations it presents, the obstacles interposed, the worth of the spiritual nature to be educated, the helps offered through a Divine and transforming Teacher, and gained by a holy life, introspection, a resolute will, and the Divine strength; to which succeed a reference to right views of life, the hope of immortality, the believer's joy, the Christian aspect of death; and the whole is concluded by a sermon on probable memories in heaven.

Of course, there is no full discussion of any one topic; but perhaps there may be found here some of the leading thoughts that belong to a Treatise on a Religious Life.

The Author knows full well that these sermons will not have the slightest interest beyond here and there one to whom he sustains affectionate relations; and to such, especially to young men of his acquaintance, he gives this volume, with every expression of love, as the *Words of a Friend.*

Longwood, *March* 1, 1870.

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WORDS OF A FRIEND

SERMON I.

THE REALITY.

"It is not a vain thing, it is your life." — DEUT. xxxii. 47.

How is religion possible in man?

Let us reflect carefully upon that question. If we would build up a religious life we wish to know what we are to build upon. In erecting a house we begin at the foundation, and first of all make that sure. What in man's nature is the foundation of religion? Has it no basis there? Or has it a legitimate and authentic support?

We have all thought of these questions. Let us think of them again. And as we can have no love for a captious spirit, and no interest in reaching narrow and mean conclusions, let us keep an open and generous mind to welcome the truth.

One fact meets us in the outset. Of all beings upon the earth, so far as we know, man alone has a susceptibility of religion. The animals which come nearest to him in intelligence discover no tokens of a conception of their Creator, nor of any

sense of duty or accountableness. The idea implied in the word *worship*, man alone comprehends, and expresses by times, places, and acts of devotion.

We mark another fact. Man in all parts of the world, and in all ages of history, has shown this susceptibility. Who needs any verification of this statement? Its general truth is patent on the surface of all the records of man; so that the old biographer, Plutarch, said, "If you look over the world you will find cities without walls, and tribes without arts, but nowhere a nation without worship."

There must be something in our nature that lays the foundation for religion; just as any other universal susceptibility must have its foundation there. Can we tell what that something is?

We all have heard of the answers which some have given. It is not strange there should be men who love unsound speculation, and fanciful paradox, as well on this subject as on many others. Neither is it strange that there should be other men who may have an interest in unsettling the foundations of belief, and sneering at all human virtue as a mere name, or at best a dream. Their views, if not frequently circulated in books, are more or less, in all communities, repeated from mouth to mouth, forming an unwritten literature of skepticism, to which, probably, no one is altogether a stranger.

Oftentimes familiar objects, a rock, or a post, if seen in the dim shades of night, will loom up in gigantic size, and assume a threatening attitude. They shrink into their harmless insignificance when we look at them by daylight.

It has been said that all religion is superstition. But what is superstition? Why should mankind in general have superstition? On what capacity of our nature is superstition grafted? The horse, the elephant, is not known to have a superstition. Even in man we see it is not a healthy product of culture and science. It is a perversion of a faculty that is denied a sound training, and hence shoots out in this baneful growth. Accordingly, superstition is what Burke so justly termed it, the religion of untutored minds; and the proof is found in the fact that true religion has been the greatest exterminator of superstition, while times of spiritual ignorance and epochs of unbelief have always been most fruitful of vagaries and monstrosities.

It has been said, again, that religion is the product of man's timidity. But why should man's fears have gathered themselves so universally to this channel, and run in this direction, if there be not some trend in his nature, some fountain of a predisposition, far up in the primitive facts of his being, from which this current so surely flows? What is that predisposition? Do we not cheat ourselves by a mere paralogism if we say that man's timidity is the cause why he is timid on this

subject of religion? The point is, why do his fears universally take *this* direction?

It has been said, further, that the priest made religion. But who made the priest? We are looking for that element in our nature of which the priest is the expression, the element which created the priest, and without which the priest could no more exist than could a musician among a people who had no perception of the harmony of sounds.

It has been said, once more, that man's vanity gives birth to religion. Puffed up with some bloated idea of his importance in the universe, man's pride is flattered by fancying himself noticed by superior beings, and his self-esteem suggests to him that he is to live beyond the grave. But are self-esteem and religion cognate and harmonious ideas? Does growth in pride have any tendency to produce increased faith in God? Do not the terms of this question bring to view one of the strongest antagonisms of our nature, an exaggerated egoism annihilating everything but self, while the perfection of religion is seen in the destruction of the roots of vanity and pride?

Now these answers to objections, if not needed to blow away this chaff, may help us to conceive of the true point involved in the inquiry before us, and lead each of us to approach it with his own careful thought. This is the best help which one can give to another, — to help him to think for

himself. And especially on this subject of religion, overlaid so much by loose thoughts, and ill-considered words, and traditional misconceptions, of what immense importance it is to take it home for an earnest survey by our own minds.

When now I come to give you the analysis of this subject which best satisfies me, and to state what I believe to be the true foundation of religion in the nature of man, let me first of all say a word about the difficulties which beset this whole inquiry. The question does not relate to a matter of sense, which we can see and touch like the foundation-stones of a house. We are in the region of ideas, — that upper region of conviction, faith, hope, which is ours as reasonable beings, and to which it is the chief glory of our nature that we can ascend.

The subject summons us to a judicial exercise of our intellect, conscience, and heart. The answer we may reach is not likely to flash conviction upon us, like the solution of a mathematical problem. It will be enough if it shall seem more and more reasonable and satisfying, the more we reflect upon it in our best hours.

Let me premise one thing more. The analysis I am about to present may not be such as others have stated, nor such as you would state yourself. But of what consequence is this? Examinations leading to varying results do not invalidate the reality of the object examined. Beside the general

anticipation of different conclusions, arising from the diversity of sides on which we approach this great subject, there is the further difficulty of defining some of the most familiar emotions of the heart. We never make sufficient allowance for this.

A man tells us of his new religious feeling, of the wonderful joy that thrills his soul, of the peace passing all understanding that has taken possession of his heart ; and because, when we question him closely about the matter, he seems to express himself vaguely, fails to give us any clear ideas, and appears to have none himself, we are apt to conclude that he is bewildered and deluded.

A simple lesson in metaphysics should rebuke us. If the religious man should question us about some of our most natural and undoubted feelings, the tables might be turned against us. For example, he hears us speak of the sublimity of the ocean. Suppose he should interrogate us about this feeling of sublimity, and ask us to define it, and tell what it is like, that he may have a correct idea of it, and be able to see whether it be a mere whim, or a real feeling founded in the nature of man.

Could we answer these questions to his satisfaction ? Could he not confound, perplex, and baffle us, just as easily as some play this poor game with the man who feels the emotions of religion ?

The truth is, many of our most common and

best authenticated feelings are altogether incapable of definition, and at best we can only describe the objects which awaken them, or the circumstances under which they are felt. Take for instance our love of beauty. What is beauty? By what faculties do we enjoy it? What are its elements? What is its true theory, and what its foundation in the nature of man?

Who can answer these questions? Who does not know that hardly any two writers have answered them alike? But who does not see that this difficulty of definition, and this diversity of analysis, do not in the least impair our confidence in the reality of the love of beauty, as a veritable and authentic exercise of our nature?

There are some advantages in an attempt to analyze this subject of religion, even if the analysis should be inexact. Besides showing that this manifestation of our nature labors under no more obscurity than belongs to other spheres of our experience, it may help to form the conviction, of unspeakable importance to our soul, that religion is not a mere outside growth, a fungus, a parasite, a tradition, a custom, but has its ever-living root in the nature of man.

If now we inquire for the elements of religion in man's soul, do we not find there these *four ideas*: —

1. The first is the idea of God; the simplest, the most intelligible, yet at the same time the loftiest and sublimest thought that ever entered

man's mind, but which will enter there as surely as he is a man.

2. The second is the idea of our dependence upon God, that He has the control of our destiny, that we are in his hands, subject to his power.

3. The third is the idea of a right which He has to prescribe the manner of our life, with the corresponding duty on our side of living agreeably to his mind.

4. And the fourth is the idea of the possibility that death may not put an end to these relations to Him, but may make them more clearly seen and felt.

What Moses added to these primitive religious conceptions constitutes the Hebrew Religion. What Christ added to them constitutes the Christian Religion. But these lie back of all outward revelation, are an interior and universal revelation, and enter into the essential nature of man.

They seem to be as truly a part of himself as his capacity to count numbers, or to enjoy what is beautiful and sublime. In the universality with which they are received, in the spontaneity with which they are apprehended, in the absolute certainty that they will occur to every reflecting mind, in the impossibility wholly to eradicate them, though we may wish and try to do it, in these facts we may see proof that these four conceptions constitute a part of the vital and indestructible substance of the soul.

Old classic history tells us that when the artist, Phidias, made his famous shield of Minerva, he engraved upon it his own image so deeply that no one could erase it without destroying the shield itself. We may say of these Four Ideas that they are so deeply engraved on the very make of the soul that they cannot be obliterated but by the destruction of the soul itself.

We may have heard it doubted whether a man, shut out from infancy from all intercourse with his fellow-beings, would have the ideas here named. I think we have but little interest to know what the result of such an experiment would be. After all it would not prove anything. Such a man might not have any idea of truth, justice, right; but it would not follow that these do not belong to us as men. Every faculty is subject to conditions of development, and will not grow without some favoring circumstances, no more than a grain of wheat can germinate on a bare rock.

But I am intent now upon setting forth the reality of these primitive religious conceptions, and the reality of the emotions and duties to which they legitimately lead.

This is no place for metaphysical argument. Learned books have been written upon each of the points under notice, by men who have devoted their life-time to devout contemplation and thought. It is not necessary that you should read them. The process may be much more short and simple, and not the less trustworthy.

Look into your own heart. Deal justly and truly with yourself. Do you doubt that you have these elemental ideas? Do you not know that you have them? Do you not feel certain that such conceptions belong to you because you are a human being, that it is the make of your mind to receive them, as truly as it is the make of your lungs to receive the air, or the make of your eye to receive the light; and that you have no more reason to suspect you have been mocked and deluded in the former case than in the two latter?

When therefore you yield yourself to their influence, you do it because such is the make of your nature. When you think of yourself as under the protection of a Being greater and wiser than all, you do it because such is your nature. When you respond to the duty of conforming your life, so far as you can, to the wise and benignant rules which He has made known, you do it because such is your nature.

It is your nature. Let me repeat these words. Religion is not something artificial and superinduced. It is a product of your nature. Its exercises of love, joy, gratitude, trust, are all sound and healthy exercises, — just as much when cherished towards a divine Benefactor and Friend, as when cherished towards an earthly benefactor and friend.

And will it do to call the sure and solid results of such a course by any other name than a reality?

If these religious emotions give you some of the sweetest hours of your life, is not that happiness a reality? If religion proves to be a friendly guide to your nature, keeps its lower passions in check, and brings out the higher capacities of your soul, is not the power that thus blesses you a reality? If religion prompts you to duties which you are prone to put off, and gives you heart and courage to perform them, is not this help a reality?

I am a young person, one may say, and like most young persons am perhaps too fond of thoughtless pleasures; and if religion makes me watchful, considerate, and saves me from those perils where so many have found their ruin, is not that power which holds me up a reality?

I am a man in business, another may say, and my mind is jaded from morning till night, year after year, by my thousand cares, and I feel my soul to be shut up and darkened, as if the walls of a prison were pressing closer and closer around me. If now I find a power in religion to break this thraldom, and to open my heart to all pure and generous pleasures, will it do to say that this is not a reality?

I look forward to the changes in my lot and in my friends that may come upon me in this changing world; is not my serene confidence and trust a reality?

I must take my turn to lie there where we must all lie — on a sick and dying bed; what is it that

gives me peace and hope, takes the sting away, and makes death swallowed up of life, what is this but a reality?

I repeat it, finally, a reality. I do not know by what other name I can call it. Do you call the solid earth a reality? Do you call your physical body a reality? Do you call the property you have labored for and have treasured up a reality? Only a few years will pass away before all these shall be to you as shadows and mists of the morning, while religion will seem not merely a reality but the only reality. It is not a vain thing, it is your life.

SERMON II.

INVITATIONS.

"My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." — PSALMS lxxxiv. 2.

IF religion has its foundation in certain conceptions which have been wrought into the framework of our nature, one result will be that every man will, at times, be conscious of some inward promptings inviting him to this subject.

No doubt we can recall times when we have been unusually sensitive on this point. Religion had a fresh interest, a new and strange power, and we felt called to give it our affections and our life. These emotions may have been very brief and fitful. But we know the facts of our internal experience. We have had such invitations. Let us reflect upon them, that we may see their character, and the use we are to make of them.

It may be you have thought these things are too personal, too sacred, to be spoken of in the hearing of your nearest friend; and you may shrink from communion with them here.

I can well understand that feeling. Reserve does not always imply indifference. On this point

we are sometimes tempted to harsh judgments. Such a vast amount of the thought and work of the world is given to this life alone, that we may feel like doubting whether men in general have any faith in the soul, or earnest concern for its future well being.

But we must remember that it is only the worldly side of every man's life which we see. Beneath that mask of apparent unconcern which he seems to wear so easily and so defiantly, his life, we may be sure, has another side which we do not see. Moments of solemn reflection when voices from a higher world plead with him, and he cannot help yielding them some attention, and they give an unwonted thoughtfulness to his brow, and strange, deep moving emotions to his heart — there is no man living who has not had such moments, though they may be known, beyond himself, to Him only who sees the heart.

We do not enough consider how many things may deter him from ever speaking of them, and may make him prefer to conceal them beneath an external insensibility. Consciousness of inability to express what he feels, perhaps some self-reproach that he has neglected the suggestions of his better moments so long, fear that he may not meet entire sympathy from others, dread of their misconception, or pity, or ridicule, — all these causes may prevent him from manifesting an interest which in the deepest places of his heart he may have.

We talk about hypocrites who profess more than they feel; but let us remember that there are hypocrites also in the opposite sense who feel more than they profess. At any rate, let us not be deceived by the outside shows of the world. Who can doubt that there is a reference to spiritual interests which is far more sincere, tender, and frequent than we are prone to suspect?

Possibly there may be another cause which may prevent you from approaching this subject in a frank and open mood. In describing the invitations to religion which you have felt, you may think there is something of presumption in my attempt. You may ask how I can pretend to know your heart, and by what kind of divination I expect to enter the citadel of your inmost thoughts?

In reply, I may say there is a divination open alike to all, and requiring but little skill to use it. The key is found in the essential identity of human hearts. In respect to every great subject that kindles emotion, similar impressions are made upon all. Standing on the shore of the ocean, beneath the cloudless stars, before a wonderful painting or statue, in the presence of a mighty display of power, or a rare scene of beauty, we utter at once any real feeling we have, assured it will find a kindred emotion in him who stands near us, and that the quick response will be, "So I feel myself." Here is the foundation of friendship, society, eloquence, poetry, and art.

Thus in all departments of emotion the human heart is one; and it is one on that subject which is sublimer than the ocean, and higher than the stars, and which fills the mind in its reflective moments with a wonder and an awe which nothing else can call forth. What I have felt on this subject in all natural and just states of mind, David and Isaiah felt three thousand years ago, and Paul and John felt, and countless others in every age since, and in every land.

And you have felt it too. Even those emotions which perhaps we are apt to regard as most peculiar to ourselves, our idiosyncrasies, did we know all the facts of others' experience, we might see that they knew all these too, — the same combinations of light and shade, of hope and fear, of truth and error, varying as our outward conditions vary, but ever leaving, when these conditions are alike, the same impressions upon the soul, as a star will picture itself alike in ten thousand mirrors.

Brothers in the reception of a spark of God's own nature, brothers in a common consciousness of sin, brothers in the offers made to us of redeeming grace through Christ, brothers in the hope of the great Hereafter, we are brothers also in the emotions, warnings, invitations, which all these common conditions suggest. In the deep things of my heart I find the ready key to the deep things of your heart. Let us commune upon these things as brothers, that we may be helpers of each others' joy.

Opening, then, with tenderness and reverence one little window that looks into your heart, may I presume to describe, in the form of a supposed autobiography, some of the sacred emotions you have felt. Would not a memoir of your religious experience, if fully written by yourself, contain some such words as the following? —

I do not remember the time when my mind first received the idea of God. It was probably suggested by some word from a parent, teacher, or friend, far back earlier in my childhood than my memory extends; but I can well recall many of the feelings with which this great thought used to fill my young heart. I remember that oftentimes when I lay on my bed at night, or when in my chamber I read some verses in the Bible and would pause to reflect upon what they meant, there were strange emotions of wonder and awe which took possession of my soul. I could not but think what a great and good Being God must be, to make the sun, the stars, the trees, the flowers, the great, wide world, and all it contains; to make me, my parents, and friends, and to give me my home, and so many pleasures of my life.

Thus the Good Spirit was, even at that early period, moving upon my soul. Perhaps I was then more open to good impressions than I have ever been since. When I have looked back upon what I was in my childhood, it seems a remem-

brance of something more unspotted, more trusting and believing, more willing to be led upward, than I have ever found in myself since; and the fact suggests how strikingly our nature, as we see it in its first and least corrupt state, is fitted to religion, how readily it takes in these great thoughts of God, of duty, of Christ, and heaven.

Childhood, without imputing to it the graces of an angel, childhood, with all its imperfections and deep-seated biases, is at least not infidel. It believes, it feels, in its own way and according to its measure it adores. Such is the harmony between the primitive ideas of religion and the nature of man in its least corrupt state. The fact that they are fitted to each other proves the vital reality of religion; and is not this the fact referred to when Jesus said we must receive the kingdom of God "as a little child?"

So felt I in my childhood. And then when I grew up, this sense of awe in the presence of religious ideas, though occurring less frequently, and with diminished intensity, still has come back to me on many well-remembered occasions of my life. I will now try to describe some of them, and to give a brief statement of my feelings at each of these times.

I remember once — it must have been just before I reached mature life — an intimate friend, the companion of my studies and sports, sickened and died. I think I shall never forget my feelings

when I stood at the open grave. It was not chiefly fear that took possession of me then, though there was something full of dread in the departure of a bright, joyous spirit, and in the mystery of death. Still I remember that the feeling which pressed strongest upon my young heart was, that through the opening made by that ascending spirit, I saw something higher, more enduring, more resplendent, than anything which this world presented, something which seemed to turn all sickness, separation, and death into so many steps of my progress upward, if only I could have the unspeakable good which seemed offered to my soul.

It was one of the marked impressions of my life. It was akin in its effect to the awe and seriousness of still earlier days. It left its blessing of thoughtfulness and tenderness for many weeks; and though after a while it was worn away, I feel it was one of those invitations to a better life which are sent at times to all.

I may open to you another experience of my heart. It was no unusual event which occasioned it. Good health, bright spirits, a clear mind, a quiet hour, a disposition to meditate, were among the favoring circumstances; but there may have been a higher influence than all these then moving my soul. I could tell you the year and the day; for I was in a mood which compelled me to write down some solemn resolutions, and they are among

my private papers still. It was on a Sunday evening. The day had been a calm and holy one, and its lessons had come with unwonted sweetness to my heart. I sat musing at my open window. A scene of beauty and peace was spread out before my eye, and the setting sun was pouring its flood of golden light upon earth and cloud — the smile and blessing of departing day.

How can I tell you of the wondrous peace which seemed to flow into my soul? It came from the thought of the goodness of God, following me through my life, and spreading out before me all that unsurpassed magnificence and glory. And when I remembered how I was living a poor, ungrateful life, so much a stranger to Him who had blessed and was blessing me, and so much unfitted for that higher world of which all that beauty was no just emblem, may I make the confession of the tears I then shed, of the prayers I then breathed, of the resolutions I then formed? That hour, too, was a voice inviting me upward. Would that it had been more faithfully heeded and obeyed!

I remember another time marked by a like deep spiritual experience; but I have never before named it even to my nearest friend. It was occasioned by an event which often brings relief to the homes of fond affection, though here also I cannot but feel that some higher power was exerting a divine influence over me. The light and

joy of our house had been smitten down by a sickness nigh unto death. For days and nights had we gathered with anxious looks around that bed, watching every changing sign, amid the flickering alternations of hope and fear.

Who has not felt the agony of suspense that is sometimes crowded into a few such hours; the thick-coming thoughts, which will press with a mountain-load upon the heart; the appalling darkness which encompasses with closer and closer folds?

But now when that darkness was suddenly dispersed, and that load lifted off, and my friend was given back to me with a new lease of life, and as a fresh treasure to my heart, how did that heart go up to Him who had held the issue in his hand, and had vouchsafed to me that blessing? I am speaking of what thousands have felt in like circumstances, and may unbosom myself with freedom, and tell you what a reality seemed that God who was the Giver of this recovery, and how amid my tears of joy I vowed to offer all myself to Him, as a life-long expression of my gratitude.

But the short autobiography which I proposed to write must here close. These few sketches are enough, however, to show that this is just such an autobiography as every reflecting man, in the review of his life, may make. Only I have not named a hundredth part of the invitations to a

religious life which are furnished in man's nature, and in the circumstances of his earthly lot.

What have been your thoughts when, on a bed of sickness, you have reflected upon the lessons of your weakness and mortality? What have been your thoughts when, with recovered strength and new health coursing in your veins, you have gone forth for the first time from your sick chamber, joyful to greet anew this fair universe, on which your mortal eyes might never have rested again? What have been your thoughts when ties, formed as you hoped for life, have been severed, and that path, in which you have found a helper and a friend, you are now doomed to tread alone? What have been your thoughts as you pass the solemn boundary of the years; — the past, with all its record of opportunities and deeds closed up for judgment; the future, leading, it may be, to the last year you shall ever see on earth?

The calls and promptings of our common nature, amid circumstances of trial and duty in which we are all placed, — where is the man who has never felt them, as where is the man who may not be blessed by them, if only he will use them aright?

What is that right use of them?

Let me suggest it in the directness and freedom of a friend.

1. Look upon these invitations with sacred reverence. They are holy things. The choicest influences, the most precious opportunities of your

whole life, may gather around those points. They are the instinctive yearnings of the heart, "feeling after if haply it may find" its Creator, Upholder, and Guide, though indeed "He is not far from any one of us." They are the tides of human affection, responsive to an influence from heaven, just as the bosom of the ocean obeys a mysterious attraction from above. They are like silken filaments, cast by the ministry of angels around your soul, that it may be drawn to spiritual things. Do not rudely rend them away.

2. Perhaps they may bear this further resemblance to angels' visits, that they are "far between," coming to you only with diminishing frequency and power. If so, you can put yourself in an attitude to receive them. All our higher enjoyments, like those from poetry, music, art, sentiment, are subject to certain conditions. We must be in harmonious frames of body, mind, and mood, to receive them. So is it here. There are trains of thought, companions, books, places and hours of retirement, expressions of praise and prayer, which have a peculiar power over us, and through which we may receive these divine breathings. If they are like the wind, and we know not whence they come nor whither they go, we can at least open the windows of our soul, and keep them open, and lowly ask for these refreshing airs of heaven.

3. And then when we have received them, who

needs be told what we are to do? In such solemn hours, who does not see conscience point to some duty omitted, to some sin indulged, to some service that waits the action of our will. Could the secret history of all persons be known, with how many might it be seen that the hours here referred to constitute the turning-points of their lives? The career of a saint's immortal blessedness, the path of a sinner's enduring woe, traced back to their earliest years, may at that point meet and cross, where they both had voices crying out within them, voices which one heeded and the other disobeyed.

4. I will only add, that under the influence of these invitations a religious life seems not only practicable, but I may almost say easy. At other times it hardly seems possible. There is a tide in the affairs of men, and now is the favoring current in the greatest concern of our life. A responsibility rests on these moments, such perhaps as may not rest on weeks and months of our ordinary experience. When our heart and our flesh cry out for the living God, to be careless *then* may be to be hardened forever.

SERMON III.

OBSTACLES.

"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."
MATT. xxvi. 41.

IF in an hour of thoughtful self-communion, there are whispering voices that call us to a holier life, and we feel like saying, "I will arise and go to my Father," some stiffened habit, some indulged inclination may the next hour struggle for the mastery, and make us aware that the path of a religious life is not easy. There are obstacles to be overcome; and we will here look at them, to see what they are, and to consider why we meet them.

I enter at once upon this subject by asking you to reflect for one moment upon the general intractableness of our nature.

I speak not of our religious nature only, but of our intellectual nature also, and indeed of the bent to be given to our will in any direction whatever. It is, describing it generally, a rigid, stubborn nature, not easily moulded and shaped.

Let us look upon this now simply as a fact. Do not perplex yourself about its cause. Here wise and good men differ; some believing that this

feature is a part of the foreordained constitution of man's discipline; while others hold that it was superinduced by some dreadful violence through the first experience of sin. The inquiry may be worth following up at a proper time, but not now. At present we are to fix our attention solely upon the *fact*.

It is impossible to overstate how much depends upon a clear and adequate comprehension of it. All just conception of the greatness of the work of religious culture must come from a right view here. All courage which is not daunted by the first experience of difficulty, all faith which does not waver by the first encounter with doubt and perplexity, all considerations to show the necessity of watchfulness and perseverance, must be drawn from this source.

The traveller prepares himself according to his journey. In a hard and rugged path he will give up in despair if he anticipated only a holiday excursion; but might have pressed through all troubles had he foreseen them, and braced up his mind to meet them.

No one can have failed to notice how much our nature early chafes under discipline, and is instinctively a rebel to authority. It is so throughout childhood, and remains so till a second nature of habit be induced. Accordingly the most successful government over the young is that which maintains its influence imperceptibly, the chains

of whose power are either gilded, or kept out of sight.

The instinct to resist direction often runs through everything. It is seen in the school-boy's disinclination to study, in the young lad's impatience at his first confinement to work, in his disposition to overleap the limits of order and method in the arrangements of his time, and in the routine of domestic life. Even his dearest plays, if they were commanded, would instantly lose their charm. If we should undertake to force him to sin, that instinct might show itself then, he preferring a course of virtue merely to have his own way.

Thus we ought not to regard this propensity as a bias to sin, though it is frequently so represented. Perhaps we ought to have more respect to what may have for its office to assert and bring out individuality.

But beside this reluctance to direction, there is the immense labor of discipline. We can conceive that God might have made our natures so plastic that they would at once be responsive to our will; so that the moment we resolved, for example, that we would have a strong memory, we should possess it; the moment we desired to communicate our ideas, language intelligible to all should flow from our lips; the harmonies we felt in our souls should pour themselves forth at once on instruments of music; conceptions of divine beauty should stamp themselves upon the canvas or mar-

ble at the first attempt of our hands; ideas of graceful manners should mould at once all the motions of our bodies; and in short, in the whole compass of man's attainments there should be no long, tedious, struggling, lame, and halting process between desire and realization.

The bare conception of such a constitution of our nature may lead us to see more justly, by way of contrast, what that nature is; and the difficulty referred to so much necessitates self-discipline that it deserves to be illustrated more at length.

We might have a lively idea of it if, supposing we had never been trained to use any speech, we undertook to express our emotions to others. What an immense achievement this of speech is! We are hardly conscious of it because we learn its use so gradually when we are young, though we are then some dozen or fifteen years about it before we have anything beyond a mere parrot-like imitation of sounds. We get a sense of the amount of labor required when we undertake to acquire a new language. We must give two or three years to it, and years of much hard work. What a vast number of little things we have to attend to, — nouns, verbs, adjectives, cases, moods, tenses, — what a draft upon our memory, patience, industry, and all because our nature interposes such obstacles in this line of advancement.

You would become a proficient in music. Its heavenly harmonies are within you, but you want

to bring them out. You must labor years to do it, with a minute care to a thousand little details, to which you must bring a sturdy and steady resolve, that will hold out in patience, and will take fresh courage from repeated failures.

You would express on the canvas some of the conceptions of beauty which have smitten your soul; and ten years' close study and practice will not enable you to master all the difficulties to be overcome in perfecting a surface not larger than a dime.

You desire to acquire ease and gracefulness of manners, and for this purpose you place yourself under the care of teachers, and seek the best models in society; but the more you attend to this point the more you are impressed by the obstinacy with which former gestures and habits adhere to you, and perhaps you can never conform yourself outwardly to your idea.

You make it a study to acquire strength of intellect, clearness of apprehension, fairness of judgment, a sagacious breadth of thought, enriched with learning and experience; and you find that all this is only the slow growth of years, that in fact nothing less than a long life perfects it, so that a man's days are ended just as he gets really fitted to live.

If these illustrations make us see that our nature is moulded only by time and labor, let us mark the fact that some of the difficulties in the way of a

religious life are in strict analogy with all this. And while every other avenue of man's advancement has — to use the imagery of the "Pilgrim's Progress" — its "hill of difficulty," and its "rock of danger," and its "slough of Despond," and its "giant Despair," and its "burden" of heavy toil, how can we expect exemption in the highest work put into man's hands, the sublimest art of his life, the culture of that part of his nature which makes him only a little lower than the angels?

An early resistance to direction, and an obstinate immobility to culture — are these the only difficulties in the way of a religious life? Is there no obstacle down deeper than we have yet gone? Jesus said in the text, the flesh is weak; is the spirit always willing to do what we know to be right? Is there no foe lurking amid the first springs of our motives? Can we forget the words of the Apostle, *The good that I would I do not, the evil which I would not that I do; the sin that dwelleth in me; warring against the law of my mind?*

Who has ever seriously set about a religious life without finding a deep meaning in these words, something giving an overpowering influence to what is present to the senses, gilding the lures of pleasure, flattering the love of indulgence, pleading for every darling desire and petted habit, disinclining to self-denial and self-sacrifice, and allying itself to every weak side of the heart?

Perhaps you remember the lines in which a quaint old poet shows how all our long list of defenses are at the mercy of one little internal foe. He says: —

"Lord, with what care hast Thou begirt us round!
Parents first season us; then schoolmasters
Deliver us to laws; they send us bound
To rules of reason, holy messengers,

"Pulpits and Sundays, sorrow dogging sin,
Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes,
Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in,
Bibles laid open, millions of surprises,

"Blessings beforehand, ties of gratefulness,
The sound of glory ringing in our ears,
Without our shame, within our consciences,
Angels and grace, eternal hopes and fears.

"*Yet all these fences and their whole array,*
One cunning bosom-sin blows quite away."[1]

Some have believed that the sinful desire which easily besets us is at times darted into our hearts through the wiles of Satan. Others have held that it comes from a nature tainted and corrupted by the sin of Adam. But is the demand for continual struggle less imperative, is the necessity for watchfulness and prayer less stringent, if we believe that it is through the needed discipline of human faith and virtue? I think not less but far greater; while as a proposition this last view

[1] George Herbert.

seems to me to be a thousand-fold more reasonable and more encouraging.

But this brings us to our other question, Why do we meet obstacles to a religious life?

If it be not given to man to discern the final cause, it is something for us to see that the case presses with no more difficulty here than in other things where we do not allow it to perplex us. Why is not man born a matured being, enjoying from the first the full perfection of his nature? In other words, Why are we born men? Why not angels, why not gods?

It is something, once more, for us to remember that our condition, whatever it may be, is, after all, God's Primary School for human virtue, the school in which, as He judged, it is best that man's trial should begin. It requires, therefore, no great humility to believe that on the whole it must be a good school; and quite different from the Devil's school, for which it is sometimes taken.

As to the fitness of this school for the culture of the religious life, how can any man pass judgment who has not seriously tried it? We should think it an amazing presumption for one to decide questions relating to music, painting, language, mental science, who had never given any attention to these subjects. Have we ever heard of a man who has said, "I have bestowed as much thought and effort to a religious life as other men have given to learn a language, or acquire an art, and

I have had no success and no reward?" Does any one believe that such a case can possibly occur? Great as the obstacles in our way may be, does any man doubt that they will yield if we give only one half the time, patience, self-control, and vigorous discipline, which are squandered on inferior pursuits?

It is a great deal more to consider that, at any rate, amid all the obstructions both to will and to do, the measure required of us will be that we do what we can. What a rule of warning as well as of encouragement!

It is another great thought that the infinite beauty and worth of spiritual excellence may justify all the labors and struggles, the falterings and perils, by which it is achieved, just as the richness of the fruit justifies all the long and slow processes, the dews and the rains, the winds and the storms, amid which it is matured.

Once more, it is a further encouraging reflection that our present encounter with difficulties may have the most important bearing upon all our future progress, a bearing which only in the other world we may fully comprehend. If we shall then see that these difficulties stand connected with all just possession of ourselves, and that they were the needed teachers of watchfulness, patience, humility, prayer, self-discipline, and inward energy, it may be that the glorified spirit will see few

things for which it will more bless its divine Governor and Guide.

And finally, it is, I suppose, for all these reasons that the sacred writers give us repeatedly those remarkable texts, which show that while they recognized the fact that the religious life was a scene of struggle, they yet described it as a struggle that is spanned by the bow of hope. There is a ring both of warning and of courage in their words: "Take to yourselves the whole armor of God." "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." "God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." "Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and the latter rain." "Be ye also patient, for in due time ye shall reap if ye faint not." "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

SERMON IV.

THE SOUL.

"What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" MATTHEW xvi. 26.

THE institutions and habits of thought of the times before Christ regarded men chiefly in the mass. Their worth was estimated by a computation applied to them gregariously, as capable of bearing so many arms, or furnishing so many servile attendants in the retinue of the great. Now and then there might be an emperor, a general, a philosopher of sufficient importance to be counted as an integer; but most men were fractions so small that only when a large number were united were they counted at all.

With a dim faith in any existence hereafter, how could there be a higher idea of man than this? Where all thought is confined exclusively to the present scene alone, a thousand men seem of no more consequence than so many tenants of the mole-hill, or so many insects sporting in the warmth of a summer's sun.

But as soon as men came to have any assured

belief in a life beyond the grave, a life which will be of infinite duration, and may yield a priceless worth to each believing heart, they perceived that there are higher interests than those which concern men in the mass. A future mysterious destiny attached significance and importance to each individual; and the startling truth was announced, that even the whole outward world was not a measure of the worth of the soul.

When we speak of the worth of the soul, perhaps there is, with those who hear this language, an incredulous feeling arising from the question, Why do not souls generally show some signs of their worth now? If the soul of the beggar has an infinite value, how happens it that this value has reference only to a future life, where we cannot now measure it, or realize it? Why is not a little bit of this value apparent here upon earth, enough to keep him out of rags, enough to give some hint of his future greatness, enough to make him an interesting and hopeful being, and to awaken in our hearts some emotions of affection and respect?

Instead of this, as one may say, it seems as if the present system of the universe was utterly careless and wasteful of human souls, and treated them as things of absolutely no worth at all. There are at this moment three hundred millions of human beings living in a savage state, hardly one step above that of the brutes; and if each one of

them has a priceless soul, why for ages have they lived and died like the most worthless things on the face of the earth?

What a revelation is made by a walk through some overcrowded and filthy street in a great city! As we look down into the cellars, and up into the garrets, and find them filled with new-born human beings, more than one half of whom will be swept away by want, foul air, the cholera, the plague, while the most of those who grow up will wear out a few years in the lowest forms of existence, — truly, if all these have souls for each of which a world must not be exchanged, why do they vegetate only like so many pestiferous weeds in the great field of humanity?

Thoughts like these may have perplexed us, and it may be well to look at them.

So far as the perplexity arises from the great number that are born into the world, we must not overlook the evident plan of the Divine Being to give the blessing of existence to as many as He can. In looking through God's works we find them everywhere teeming with life. There are creatures so infinitely small that to them the leaf of a tree is a continent, and a drop of water is an ocean; and every leaf and every drop is filled with them; nor is there marble so hard, nor fire so hot, nor frost so cold, nor spot in the whole universe so deserted, but it has myriads of living witnesses of the skill and beneficence of the Creator.

If we suppose, then, that God intended to multiply human beings also, and to fill the world with them wherever they can exist, even in crowded cities and barbarian wilds, what of it? How can it be a good argument to show that God has not given me a priceless soul, because He has given it to so many?

But the point does not press so much upon the fact of the great number who are born, as upon the circumstances of neglect amid which they seem to be thrown into the world; it being inconceivable, as is supposed, that creatures of an infinite worth should begin their existence amid such wretchedness and want.

On this point we must not let the imagination play fantastic tricks with the judgment. No one has an absolute standard of outward condition according to which he may say who are, and who are not well situated, by their birth, for the purpose of a moral trial. How often we see great and good men spring up from the very lowest conditions of life, and bad men disgrace what seems outwardly the most favored lot. Our fathers, fifteen or twenty generations ago, were born amid exposures and wants, such as the poorest do not now endure; and fifteen or twenty generations hereafter, our descendants would not have their children begin life amid the evils by which the children of the best families among us are now surrounded.

Thus our ideas on this subject are the result of our position and education; and what is still more important to observe is, that our imaginations are imposed upon by quite petty and insignificant things.

We might exclaim, what a neglected condition for the birth of a child who first saw the light of life in a manger, by the side of cattle, was cradled on the hay, covered with the skin of a beast, fed from a shell, or at best from a wooden spoon, crept on the uncarpeted floor, perhaps had not even a floor to keep him from the ground, and when he grew up had no place where to lay his head! Conceive an immortal soul ushered into the world in such a condition as that!

There was an immortal soul, of an infinite worth, once so born into the world; and before we talk about the neglect of Providence in such cases, it may be well to weigh our words.

Of the outward circumstances of human life, which are infinitely various, we are apt to think that those alone are decent and tolerable to which we are wedded. But let us look beneath these varying and accidental allotments, and consider for one moment what an infant child is in itself. Perhaps we shall see some intimation that Providence has been thoughtful of it, as a thing of tender and precious worth, if we look to its new-made frame, put together with an affluence of wisdom and care which no mortal hand in the whole world

can begin to equal; if we look to its instincts providing for its preservation and pleasure in more ways than we can number; if we look to the germs of wonderful capacities which will soon enable it to comprehend something of this infinite universe of God; if we look to the possibility of its becoming a temple of God's Spirit, and a resplendent image of his glory.

We must look to all this, and take into account all that this means and represents, before we talk about the neglect of Providence for one of the least of these little ones.

But our incredulity may reach one step further. If we may not say that any souls born into the world are neglected by Providence, if much of their seeming neglect arises from our conventional way of looking at life, and nearly all their suffering springs from man's ignorance and folly, still, we may ask, how is it that newly created souls have not one sign of their alleged worth? We feel that affection for the infant which all animals instinctively feel for their young; but what solitary token do we see that here *is* an immortal soul, made to live when the world shall perish, and of whose worth the world itself is not a measure? Nothing gives us the least hint of such a stupendous truth; and is it not too great a tax upon one's faith to ask him to believe it?

Now I reply, that we might ask a like question in relation to facts which we cannot deny. Some

years ago a little infant was born, as weak, frail, helpless, as all other infants, who soon grew up to be a man whom the world knew as Dante; but in that puny child no eye saw one solitary token of the mighty genius to which the world would one day do homage; and it might then have seemed too great a tax upon human credulity to ask one to believe it.

Dante, Milton, Shakespeare,—we have the same nature that they had. Probably their chief distinction above the mass of mankind is that their gifts bloomed sooner. A little training in a future life may lift all pure souls up to a point far above that where they stood when on earth.

We see no signs in the little child of the priceless worth of the soul? What if *we* do not? May not the fact be owing to the dimness of our vision, to its lack of spiritual discernment? Over the cradle in the lowest hovel of want, if angels bend, may not *they* discern the sure gleams of an intelligence, an awe, a wonder, a love, which only an eternity can develop, while they adore that wonderful Providence which, from a beginning so lowly, raises up a spirit to be resplendent with a divine brightness and worth forever?

For these reasons, who does not see that this skepticism as to the worth of the soul is earthly, and sensual, and shallow? As the first motive to all religious watchfulness and effort, as the spring to every high hope and noble aim, as something to

buoy us up above the transitoriness and littleness of this passing world, as something to give wings to our faith even in the hour of death, what do we need so much as a deeper conviction of the worth of the soul? Made in the image of God, quenchless as God's own nature, soon to open itself with wondrous power, when freed from the fetters of the flesh, that soul is through eternity to be the vehicle of our consciousness, our memory, our hopes, our inconceivable felicity, or our unspeakable woe.

The culture of that soul — what other work has ever been put into our hands so great as this? Who of us can feel that for his part he can dispense with methods and helps of its training to which good men in all ages have found it needful and blessed to resort, — an earnest and concentrated attention to this subject, a pure and holy life, habits of thoughtful reading, meditation, and prayer, a faithful and devout attendance upon the public services of religion? If these last fall below our idea of what they ought to be, we know that a like damage is done to any lofty idea by attempting to incarnate it, such as the administration of justice by judges and juries, or the government of a nation by cabinets and politicians. But who would therefore abandon everything to neglect, and not try to reach the best result he can?

And therefore let us here give earnest and solemn heed. We watch after the body's health and vigor; shall we do less for the soul?

Guard it with jealous honor. Keep it pure from the stains of sin. Feel that no present pleasure and no worldly wealth can be an equivalent for the canker of lasting shame and remorse; and that you are rich, though with nothing else you can call your own, rich beyond all the gold of the world, so long as you have the treasure of a soul to bear through eternity an approving witness to you.

SERMON V.

THE DIVINE IN MAN.

"Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."
1 John i. 3.

Are not these very bold words? I should think they were bold words if only great men had been named; if one should say, my fellowship is with Plato and Milton. How much more bold when applied to Almighty God, and to the Lord Jesus Christ! It was indeed a great thing for the Apostle to say, our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son.

And yet there must be something in man which makes such a fellowship possible. The distance between some beings is unbridged and impassable. What fellowship has the oyster with the bird? What fellowship has the horse with an angel? The distance between man and God is not so great. There is a divine side to humanity.

We all know there is another side too. If man has aspirations that run *up* to Christ and God, he has likewise lusts and passions that run *down* to beasts and devils. History has a great deal to say of these lower connections; our experience of

life forces upon us some knowledge of them ; we may find their traces, if we will search our hearts, in our own bosom sins.

But for the present let us look to the other side of humanity, its higher side, its divine side, opening towards God, connecting with God, making the fact of a communication, a tie, a fellowship, yes, and even as the Scripture expresses it, a oneness with Him, possible.

I know that some regard all views like these here alluded to as mere sentimentalism, fit for poetry, or a subject for a young girl's composition. They deem nothing certain but what the hard experience of life teaches, what is beaten into them by the strifes, and selfishness, and sins of the world.

But who of us would not say, not only that this is a one-sided aspect of the case, and the worst side of it, but that it is also the most deceitful side of it. In the noise and dust and struggle of the world, it is only when we get out into clear sunshine and quiet air that we can see our real position ; and so, on the subject before us, till we get above the smoke and clamor of temporary passions and interests, into the bright and serene air of everlasting truths and principles, we cannot know who we are, and what relations we sustain.

If it be asked what are the evidences of this divine side of humanity, might I not appeal to the consciousness which every man has that he was

made for something better than the business of this world, however necessary and useful that business may be. He cannot help feeling that this does not fill out his ideal, nor exhaust his capacity, nor satisfy his longings. In his best moments he is conscious that his worldly employments are to his powers what playthings are to children — something to occupy the present time, while a nature far larger than they lies dimly behind them, and will soon rise above them. It is that aspiring nature which has fellowship with God.

In this freedom of my will — free, while instinct and necessity impel all other creatures, free to take its own way, and to be in a humble but real sense a cause, like God Himself,—is there not something divine in this ?

In my perception of the Right, in my love of the Good, have I not the tokens of the image of God ? The Right and the Good are the very essence of God's being ; and so far as I have them I am admitted into God's family, and am a partaker of his very nature.

Look to the fact that man can conceive of the Perfect. An imperfect being himself, surrounded by imperfect objects, in the midst of an imperfect creation, he has the idea of something perfect stamped on his soul. That he is capable of having a perception of that idea, that he can reach up to it, get hold of it, and take it into his soul — here is a tie that connects man with the All-perfect One, and reveals the divine side of humanity.

The same remark may be made of our conception of the Infinite. What a wonder that a finite being, surrounded with finite objects, should have in his soul the conception of something infinite! Whence came it? Who put it there? What is its meaning? Who can foresee all the growth of that seed? What an intimation and pledge of something divine in man!

When now, from looking to the soul itself, we look to its history in the world, when we look to the life of man, ignorant, benighted, and wicked as he has been, do we see no proofs that there is a divine side to humanity?

There have been sainted and holy men in the world, men who the longer they have lived have put off more and more the imperfections of humanity, and parting from the last coil of mortality they seem to have gone to the closest fellowship with God. There have been such men. Here is one fact. Who can deny it, or who can fathom all its significance?

The ancients raised great and good men to the honors of divinity. They deified them. Their apotheosis — what was it but a dictate of the instinct of humanity that in its best development it grows upward to be like God?

Look next to the meaning of worship. Consider what a large space worship has held in all human history. It has everywhere been one of man's leading wants and occupations. I know how some

have accounted for this, that it has been fear which has led man to pray, and that worship is but another name for cowardice. But is worship laid aside when man gets above his fears? Have reverence, and love, and gratitude, and hope, and praise, and trust, no adoring voice? Have not these, everywhere, and in all ages, sung their sweet anthems? If some have cowed before God as slaves, have not others stood up in his presence, rejoicing and happy as sons?

What is the meaning of the fact that man prays at all if it be not the recognition of a communion, a fellowship, a kindred nature? Temples and churches, the world over, are proofs of the divine side of humanity; and the fortresses and armies of the world, its battle-fields, its victories, its proud monuments, the mausoleums of Rome and Greece, and the pyramids of Egypt, all do not tell so much of the divine in man — it has been well said, — as the spire of a village church.

Moreover, what but the divine side of his humanity has lifted man up to any of those great deeds which thrill our hearts when we name them; made men feel that their fortunes and their lives were not to be thought of if they could do something for their country and their race; that toil, suffering, death, are noble when given freely for others, and that there is a preciousness of reward for such sacrifices which fills out the meaning of the words, that he who so loses his life gains it?

What but the divine side of humanity has inspired all great poems, made marble instinct with life, painted scenes of undying beauty, reared minsters and cathedrals, and set to celestial melody the solemn *Misereres?*

What but the divine side of humanity has led thousands to take up and continue the Son of God's own work on earth, to feed the hungry, to visit the prisoner, to open the eyes of the blind, to break the rod of the oppressor, and to let the oppressed go free?

What but the divine side of humanity has conceived of that better constitution of human society, that peace on earth and good-will among men, that reign of God, that kingdom of heaven, here in this present life, which all holy prophets have predicted, and which piety and faith everywhere believe will one day be realized?

All this is very well, it may be said, as far as it goes. But after all what does it prove? This supposed divine element in human nature, — who sees it, who feels it? Only here and there a dreamer, a poet, an essayist, a sermonizer. It is easy to single out a few noble and splendid things which shed some lustre upon the whole race. But look to the mass of mankind, — what signs do they give of possessing this godlike humanity?

To which I answer, what if they give none? In walking through your corn fields you do not gather the half-formed and diseased ears, though they

happen to be most abundant, as specimens of the nature of your grain. If you form some estimate of the average yield, you know that that represents the growth only of this year, and is no measure of the production of all coming time. The possibilities and tendencies of the grain you recognize in the perfected ears, and you study these as prophecies of the harvest of some future and better day. Why should we not be as just to our humanity?

Besides, who does not see how false is the implication that the mass of mankind show no consciousness of the divine element in their nature? What names does all the world hold up to honor? Is it the names of men who in their private life, or in their public career, have displayed the passions of beasts and devils? Nero, Caligula, Judas, Borgia — have not the mass of mankind covered these names with infamy? Have not examples of disinterested and noble deeds been the world's praise, and the world's grateful and joyful heritage? Is it not the tendency of all culture to give such examples a purer and more transcendent homage? How could this be but for some intuitive fellowship between the mass of mankind and these exalted deeds?

It deserves also to be considered that our opinions of the character of the mass of mankind are shaped by ever varying ideal conceptions of what mankind ought to be; so that these opinions are

not so much expressions of objective facts, as of our subjective ideas. Perhaps one reason why we so much praise a few examples of Greek and Roman virtue is that we feel obliged to measure them by something less than our Christian standard; while to the old pagan world so good a condition of mankind as we now see in most Christian countries would have been absolutely inconceivable. Thus even in our condemnation of the world we pay homage to the high ideal which Christianity has inspired; and what is that ideal but a divine fore-feeling of an ever approaching reality?

Once more, it may be said that it is not Christian to speak of the supposed divine element in man, that all true piety takes the wholly opposite view, that instead of puffing man up by dwelling upon his godlike aspirations and capabilities, the aim of the gospel, as seen in its primitive teachers, is to humble man's pride, to make him think of his failings and sins, that he may see that he is a ruined and wretched transgressor.

This whole objection seems to me to be unsound in philosophy, and false in fact, and a misrepresentation of the course pursued by the first teachers of our religion.

It is unsound in philosophy. If I inherit nothing but a ruined and sinful nature, I am not humbled by dwelling on that fact. No one can feel shame and repentance that he does not get above the limitations of his nature. He might as

well be mortified that he cannot run like the horse, or fly like the eagle. It is only by showing him that his nature is capable of better things, and that he falls below it, he abuses it, he dishonors it, that one can have a sense of humiliation, or can feel the real sting of sin.

This objection is equally false in fact. It is the concurrent testimony of all church history, that the greatest spiritual pride and arrogance have been coexistent with the lowest views of human nature. Why should it not be so? The scorn and hate of our nature as something totally tainted and corrupted, and sending the mass of mankind to destruction, have given intensity to many of the fiercest passions, especially where men have felt that *they* were saved, and have been plucked as brands from the burning. Here are not the germs of an infinite tenderness and love; we might as well expect figs from thistles.

And, finally, this objection misrepresents the instructions of the primitive teachers of the gospel. Not as the sum of mean and degrading views of humanity did the Great Teacher say, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Not as the sum of such views did St. Paul say, in his address to the Athenians, "We are of the lineage of God;"[1] and again, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God;" and St. John say in the words of the text, "Our fellowship is with the

[1] Γένος τοῦ Θεοῦ. Acts xvii. 29.

Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." True, he here alluded to hearts purified and regenerated by the Holy Spirit; but they were hearts that had elements in them which the Holy Spirit *could* inspire and mould; and this is the truth on which I have dwelt.

And its word of exhortation is, reverence that nature which has been given you, — that image of God in which you were made. Feel that it is your own voluntary sin which taints it and corrupts it. Believe there is something in you worthy of all your struggles, and self-denials, and self-sacrifices — something which has the seed of a destiny greater than you can now conceive. By prayer and holy living guard those aspirations which come from God, and tend to God, and may make you one with God, and filled with all the fullness of the godhead bodily.

SERMON VI.

CHRIST.

"What think ye of Christ?" — MATTHEW xxii. 42.

IT cannot have escaped your notice that all our controversies about the person of Christ turn on points widely different from that in which, after all, we have the deepest interest.

But it is no new thing for men, when they are disputing, and form parties, and get impassioned, to turn off to some side issue, and overlook the only point with which they have really any concern. The greater need is there to ask, What *is* the one question about Christ that has any practical importance, and what is all theological clamor about?

Jesus Christ presented Himself as a messenger from God to men. This was his claim and his office.

Now in the case of a messenger, the only question for us to consider is, was he appointed and commissioned to this work? It was for God to select whom He pleased. Suppose He thought best to send one who dwelt in heaven with Him, and in a mysterious union with his own person, his

own Son, the image and brightness of his glory, and that He made him the messenger of reconciliation and peace. What then? Our concern is not with the question who he was, but is with the question, Was he selected, and appointed, and authorized, so that in dealing with him it is the same as if we dealt with God, he having all God's power and authority behind him, to make his word and work sure to our souls?

Or suppose that God saw fit to select an exalted angel of heaven. What then? Our concern is not with the question who this angel was, but is with the question, Was *he* chosen and empowered by God, so that in dealing with him it is the same as if we dealt with God, he having all God's power and authority behind him, to make his word and work sure to our souls?

Once more, suppose God took as his messenger a man, the man Christ Jesus, giving him the spirit without measure, and endowing him with all the wisdom and love and grace necessary for his work. What then? Our concern is not with the question who this messenger was, but is with the question, Was *he* set apart and consecrated to this office, so that in dealing with him it is the same as if we dealt with God, he having all God's authority and power behind him, to make his word and work sure to our souls?

I have drawn out these three suppositions in order that we might see that we have nothing to

do with the question, What was the person of Christ? and that our interest in him lies in the other question, Was he an appointed and com missioned messenger from God?

Accordingly, who does not remember that the Gospels, from beginning to end, make this one point prominent above everything else, that Christ was sent by the Father? "This is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." "I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but He sent me." "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." "He that seeth me seeth Him that sent me." "I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment what I should say." "I must work the works of Him that sent me." "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." But were I to repeat all the passages where this language occurs I should have to quote a large portion of the Gospels.

The same point is prominent in the sermons and the epistles of the primitive preachers of Christianity. Throughout them all we find one purpose running, and that is to prove that God sent his Son into the world, that all might believe on him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent.

"Sent!" That is the refrain everywhere; and that all these varied expressions bring to view the sole point of practical interest may be seen by a

comparison. If the governments of England and the United States were mutually hostile, and a messenger should come from the former to the latter, when he presents himself to the authorities of this country, what is the question which they have first of all to settle? It is whether he was appointed and commissioned. If parties should be formed on other issues, if some should say, a messenger should have royal blood in his veins, or be a member of the nobility at least, and contend that we cannot properly receive him until we know his age, and history, and exact rank in the peerage, and if in disputing on these points we get excited and angry, and call one another hard names, and all the while forget the message that had been sent, should we not be doing a very foolish thing?

I think so. And I think, also, that it would be a timely and sensible word if one should say, "You are contending about points with which you have nothing to do. It is for the English Government to appoint whom it may please as ambassador. His authority does not depend upon his rank but upon his commission. Let us see that he comes from his sovereign, and that is enough; and then let us attend to the message he brings."

Words corresponding to these, I think, would be equally sensible and timely if addressed to Christians. Of our disputes about the person of Christ, would that the only thing to be said might be that they are foolish. In a case of such great

concernment our controversies seem impertinent and impious, and were they not so common, they might even be called insane.

Some men may believe that Christ is God himself — God taking a human form, God dying on the cross ; and may not be staggered by the supposition that the everlasting and immutable God can die, nor at the idea of derivation which the word *son* carries with it, nor at the argument that the *sent* must be subordinate to the *sender*, nor at the fact that if Christ had two natures, the human and the divine, as it was his highest nature that came down from heaven, so of that nature He says, " I proceeded forth and came from God, neither came I of myself but He sent me ; " thus showing that in his highest nature he was distinct from and obedient to God. None of these arguments, nor a hundred others just like them, may shake their faith in the absolute deity of Christ. But what of all that ? It is not what they believe about the metaphysics of Christ's nature that is the substantial thing of their faith ; but the other truth they hold to is the one thing needful, that Christ represents God, He is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, unto salvation.

Others may believe that Christ was some exalted angel, who lived before the foundation of the world, and was God's agent in creating the world, but who in the fullness of time took upon himself the form of a man, and submitted to death for our

sakes; and they may not be repelled from this view by being asked to consider upon what figurative language this whole hypothesis rests, nor by remembering that Christ could not have been tempted in all points as we are if he had the nature of an angel and was not touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and that thus the efficacy of his example is destroyed. All these and like arguments may not shake their faith. But what of that? How unimportant their metaphysical speculations compared with their belief that Christ represents God, and is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, unto salvation.

And so still other men may hold that Christ's existence commenced when he was born of his mother, that in his birth and nature and growth he was human, that the one mediator between God and man is the man Christ Jesus. And it may not trouble their faith at all to be told that qualities are ascribed to Christ which can belong, it would seem, to no merely human being, while the whole Christian world has from the first rendered him a degree of reverence and homage wholly out of place and unaccountable were he only one of our brethren of the human race. All this and more may be no obstacle to their faith. But what then? These speculations are nothing if they cling to the main thing, that Christ represents God, and is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, unto salvation.

There are few subjects on which a preacher, who means to be careful what he says, and to speak always with due reserve and modesty, may assume more confidence of utterance than on this before us. A true faith in Christ is faith in his divine commission. The language of the Scriptures, the analogies of the case, and the reason of things, all make this certain. And to this I may add that such has been the judgment of enlightened and candid men of all names.

I may here quote the words of one of the most eminent prelates of the Church of England, Bishop Watson. In one of his charges to the clergy of his diocese, he says, —

"What need is there that we should calumniate and detest one another, because we cannot agree in our notions concerning the person of Christ? His authority as a teacher is the same whether you suppose him to have been the Eternal God, or a being inferior to Him, but commissioned by Him. We are under the same obligation to obey the precepts of the gospel, are incited to obedience by the same hopes, deterred from disobedience by the same fears, whether we believe Jesus of Nazareth to have been coeternal with the first source of all being, or to have been a man miraculously conceived, in whom all the fullness of the godhead dwelt bodily. All depends upon the appointment of God. And if, instead of the death of a super-angelic, an angelic, or of a human being, God had fixed on any other instrument as a medium of restoring man to immortality, it would have been highly improper in us to have

quarreled with the means which his goodness had appointed, merely because we could not see how they were fitted to attain the end."

So said this distinguished ornament of the English Church, and I could find similar statements from the representatives of nearly every sect in Christendom.

"What think ye of Christ?" Jesus himself asked that question; and it may be said that he doubtless intended his disciples should think something about him, for he proceeded to suggest inquiries as if on purpose to lead them to clear and exalted conceptions of him; and a sermon, it may be thought, with the aim I have here in view, should hardly take its text from this conversation of our Lord.

To all which I reply, that if we will take pains to note the subject of this conversation we shall see that it did not relate to speculations about the metaphysical person of Christ, but turned on his official authority, which was greater than that of David, because David himself *called* him Lord, and God *said* to Christ, "Sit *thou* on my right hand;" and for this reason Christ was Lord to David, *by God's appointment*, and not by any consideration of his nature; so that the text confirms the point of this discourse.

"What think ye of Christ?" It may be asked again, How can we help forming some opinion about his nature and person, who he was, and what he

was? To which I answer, this is doubtless a legitimate curiosity, and every man will have his own faith to himself. I have only contended that we should hold our speculations subordinate to the one central and vital truth, that Christ, whatever else he may have been, was divinely sent by the Father.

"What think ye of Christ?" The inquiry now may look to the question, How do we know that he *was* sent by the Father? What is the evidence to prove that he was a messenger from heaven, a divinely-commissioned Saviour, a Teacher, far more to us than the great philosophers and sages of the world?

Of course I cannot, at the end of this sermon, even glance at the testimony on this point. The most convincing and transforming evidence we may find in our own souls. Where is the other being to whom our whole moral nature bears such responsive witness? Who has ever shown such sinlessness, such winning, spiritual beauty, such deep insight into the laws of the soul's inner life, such acquaintance with the moral principles by which, as we see, the world is governed, and disclosures of the future which seem so confirmed by all our purest aspirations and hopes?

I shall say nothing of the other proofs often adduced to show the divine commission of the Son of God. Learned men build up their historical arguments, and theologians multiply their disquisi-

tions upon the natural and supernatural. But is woman's affectionate and earnest trust, is the faith of the great majority of Christians, held by these ties? They have a shorter and simpler confirmation. They say with the Apostle John, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." In our day the faith of Christendom is settling more and more upon proofs of the divinity of the Son of God, drawn from what he did to quicken human sympathies, to take off the burden of woe and sin, to encourage every pure aspiration and every blessed hope, and to lift up the enduring interests of mankind. Why should we look upon this gradual change of the poise of our faith with alarm?

Should a discovery in philology prove that all the reported miracles of the New Testament are ancient Hebrew ways of describing natural events, if it might overthrow some structures called "Books of Evidences," it might not shake the trust of a single soul that finds the bread of life that came down from heaven in the Sermon on the Mount and in the Parables, and believes, not because of what others say, but because it has itself seen and known that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

"What think ye of Christ?" This question, finally, may mean what can Christ do for our souls? In the directness and earnest affection of a friend let me beseech you to welcome him as

one who brings truths higher than this world can give, and in comparison with which the wisdom of this world is foolishness. Welcome him as one who sheds light on the meaning and destiny of life, and lays a foundation for our pardon and peace, and lifts up mortal struggles and sufferings to be steps of our immortal advancement and glory. Welcome him as one on whom it pleased the Father to place your help, making him your deliverer and redeemer, who has done all that needed to be done, so that you may be no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

SERMON VII.

THE MASTER.

"One is your Master, even Christ." — MATTHEW xxiii. 8.

A GLANCE at a concordance of the Gospels shows how frequently this title, Master, was applied to Christ. It was the most common name by which his disciples addressed him. "Ye call me Lord and Master, and ye say well, for so I am;" and here in the text Jesus tells them to give that title to no one else.

Let us reflect for a few moments upon the subject which is thus presented to our thoughts, — Jesus the Master of Christians.

And I am sure there is much to interest our sympathies and affections, if we will approach the thought in a right way, in the simple statement that we have a Master in Jesus Christ. One of the deep wants of the heart is the want of a guide, some one to look up to, to lean upon, to reverence and love.

It is true no one likes the constraint of force and authority; and we all know how early and how strongly the instinct of independence asserts

its claims. I do not refer to anything of that kind, but to a guiding influence which respects man's freedom, which is based on wisdom, gentleness, love; which seeks to save man from errors, mistakes, sufferings, fearful and guilty woes; which spreads out before him the facts of his nature and condition, his duty and destiny, and thus exerts its power only in the sphere of the reason, the conscience, the heart. Influence, not authority.

This is the sense in which it is said that Jesus is the Master;[1] and in this sense of the word, the human heart, I repeat, feels its need of a Master. It is never happier than when it has such a Master. Those were the happiest hours of childhood when we had a teacher who best filled the office of a gentle, faithful, and loving guide. Much of the joy of the filial relation springs from the con-

[1] In about twenty places in the Gospels this term is applied to Christ, either by Jesus himself or by his disciples. Almost without exception the word in Greek is Διδάσκαλος, which means Teacher. Once Jesus calls himself Καθηγητής, that is, Guide, though even here the reading of the best approved manuscripts is Διδάσκαλος. We have an association of authority with the word Master, which, as we thus see, is foreign to the Gospel use of it. Probably the word Rabbi carried with it something of our modern sense of Master; and it may have been for this reason that Jesus forbid its use, when he said, "Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Καθηγητής;" so that he would neither have his disciples assume or bestow that title. We infer that Judas was the only one of the Twelve who habitually called Christ Rabbi, as if he alone was incapable of appreciating the gentle and loving influence which Jesus sought to exert.

sciousness of being in the arms of a watchful and blessing care. The dictate to choose a friend wiser and better than ourselves, to be moulded and inspired by him, comes from the same deep want. And why is it that for so many ages millions of souls have looked up to Jesus, to listen to the gentle whisper of his voice, and to lean with loving trust on his gracious arm ?

Let us not doubt what the explanation is. The human heart feels its need of a guide. There is an internal want placed in the soul by the same Divine hand which has supplied the external aid. Perhaps the most affecting passages in old pagan literature are those in which some of the great sages of antiquity expressed their longing for a teacher from heaven, and their conviction that one would some time be sent. The readiness with which men in all ages have listened to those falsely claiming to be inspired from above, shows how universal and irrepressible is the sense of a need of a guide.

When, therefore, in Jesus we find one who fills our conceptions of what is perfect in wisdom, of what is spotless in virtue, of what is divine in pitying condescension, and infinite in goodness and love, if the heart will but speak out its own true and deep feeling it will say, "That is the Master for me. Dear Master Jesus, take me into the circle of thy pupils. Let me at least touch the hem of thy garment. I am in doubt and darkness

and danger, thou canst give light and peace. Thou didst in pity stoop to my need; let me in faith lean on thy divine arm."

So some feel like saying; perhaps have said it in their hours of religious retirement. And they are happy to feel that they have a Master. The fact gives a new meaning to life. They are under a training. They are in a school. Gifts, temptations, trials, have a significance to them beyond what these have to others. Such things are parts of a discipline. Life is no longer an unmeaning routine, a selfish scramble, a mere sunshine or cloudy day followed by an eternal night. Life is lifted up and ennobled. A mighty plan runs through it. The island of to-day is joined to the continent of eternity. Their thoughts, their aspirations, stretch out to a boundless expanse; for the Master here present with his pupils in this first scene of their teaching, will soon take them to higher instruction and improvement.

The condition upon which this advancement is suspended may be stated in one word. It is obedience — willing, confiding, and affectionate obedience. But to do only what we like to do is not obedience. To do only what the world around us does is not obedience to Christ. To judge from the conduct of some, one might suppose that they were masters, and the requirements of Jesus must be accommodated to them. Duties which put upon them a disagreeable service must be inter-

preted in a more welcome sense, and toned down to the standard of an easy and self-indulgent world.

The poor, ignorant man, of whom history tells us, who, misinterpreting the figurative words of Jesus about taking up a daily cross, made literally a cross of a beam of wood, and bore it about from morning till night, till it had worn into his shoulders, and bowed him down to the dust, he at least took the attitude of obedience, and was willing to put up with self-denial, and to make cheerful self-sacrifice for his dear Master's sake; and who knows but that at last he will be more honored as a true disciple of the Crucified One than many who may now smile at his ignorance, and have no fellowship with his humility and obedience?

Some seem to suppose that Jesus is not their Master, because they have not acknowledged him to be such. But who does not know that frequently important relations exist which we do not formally confess? I am under obligations to my country from the fact of my birth, although I have never made a formal profession of my allegiance, nor taken a vow to observe its constitution and laws. I am under obligation to my parents from the fact of my birth, although I have never formally acknowledged the filial relation, nor promised to fulfill its duties. In like manner I am under obligations to the Master, Christ, from the fact of my birth, although I may have never for-

mally professed myself to be a Christian, nor promised a Christian obedience.

In all these cases my professing or not professing does not alter the essential relation of things. Duty is not to be put on or put off by a ceremony. The formal acknowledgment does not *make* the duty. That exists, whether we acknowlege it or not. Applying to your relation to your country and your family, this fact applies also to your relation to the Christian religion. Your birth under its light and hopes makes imperative your allegiance. One is *your* Master, even Christ, although you may never have said so, and never have had the thought enter your mind.

If we all have only one Master, it follows that we all alike are servants, or as Jesus, in the gentle sway he alone seeks, preferred to call it, we are all brethren; at any rate are all equal. Here in the Gospel is the grandest lesson of equality which the world has ever received, the best practical exemplification of it which the world ever saw, as in all Christian ages it has been the most effectual teacher of equality that has ever lifted up its voice in its behalf.

Was ever rebuke of spiritual domination more pointed than that given by Christ, when referring to the common subordination of rank, princes exercising authority over the people, and great rulers exercising authority over the princes, he adds the striking words, "It shall not be so

among you." He meant, "not in my plan;" for alas, it has been so in point of fact. Early did Christianity bow down before the governments of the world, and then it took the forms of the world, the ranks and offices of the world, the costume and taste of the world; and hence came popes, and bishops, and councils, and priestly power. But all the pomp and shows of Church Establishments, their gorgeous robes and splendid ceremonies, the pride of rank and name which they engender, and the spiritual tyranny to which they lead, — can you conceive of anything more repugnant to the mind of Jesus?

When we review the history of the Church, we are at first filled with amazement as we mark how everything connected with Jesus has been perverted to the service of a pride of place and thirst of power. Pontiffs rivaling the mightiest emperors have gloried in the name of "successor" of Him who had not where to lay his head. Through the longest line of sovereigns of which the world's history gives any record, they have called themselves "servant of servants," after the lowly One of Nazareth. Cardinals reveling in pomp and luxury have coveted descent from the fishermen of Galilee. That lesson of self-forgetful condescension, taught by the language of an act in the washing of the disciples' feet, has been travestied in one of the most gorgeous of papal ceremonies. Schemes of outrageous selfishness and lust have

been baptized as dictates of the "Holy Spirit." The word "bishop," denoting originally the overseer of a flock, has become a proud title of rank; and the word "minister," meaning servant, has been appropriated by a caste claiming distinct privileges and authority.

Ah well, we recover ourselves when we ask, what is the explanation of all this? For we here see the infallible proofs what a mighty Being was once known among men, who so much drew the whole world after him, that even the selfish and ambitious felt they could most distinguish themselves only by some connection with him. This attraction to himself of those who have no spiritual likeness with him, is the penalty of all greatness. In the case of the most eminent men, this attraction is spent in a generation or two; in the case of Jesus Christ, it has already lasted nearly two thousand years.

His precepts disclaiming all authority, and seeking only the influence of love and goodness, have seemed almost impracticable in such a rude theatre as Christendom has hitherto presented. But Christendom has all the while been growing up to them, and will get nearer to them by and by. Meanwhile it is no doubt true that a rejection of all spiritual authority over one another exposes to confusion and disorder, accompanied perhaps by strange speculations, and startling opinions, and individual isolation, and inability for large affiliated action.

But did not he who knew what was in man foresee all this? If all the winds of doctrine are let loose in a tempest around our ears, will they not best blow themselves pure by giving them free range? At any rate, is there anything worse than the close and poisoned air of spiritual oppression and slavery? And, therefore, when we read in the Gospels these words, "One is your Master, even Christ," though we feel what a bitter comment upon them the whole history of the Church has been, let us be thankful these words are there — the banner words of freedom and equality, yet to shine out from the New Testament with a divine brightness and power, and to guarantee to the lowest disciple of Jesus, his right to have his own faith to himself before God.

One is your Master, one alone, because the school, the flock, the body, is to be but one. By how many different names are they now known on earth — names of parties and sects, names of strife and passion, perhaps of scorn and hate. But let us believe that, after all, these differences are only external, just as on the surface of the earth we see wide varieties and conflicting powers, fire and water, hill and valley, plain and forest, while if we dig down anywhere but a few feet we strike upon beds of primitive granite that underlie them all. So there are primitive feelings, aspirations, hopes, longings, beliefs, — the granite of our human nature, underlying all pure hearts. They are one

though they know it not. All confiding souls turn to that one Master, all believing ears are glad to hear his life-giving words, all trusting eyes look to him to give brightness and joy to the world.

I have read a little story of the early days of the Church, which is here brought to my mind. It was in the fierce struggles of the Arian controversy, when armies believing in the *omoousion* were in deadly strife with other armies that believed in the *omoiousion;* and only that one syllable, marking the supposed distinction in Christ between the *same* nature and a *like* nature as God's, divided them. In some lull of the carnage two soldiers strayed from the opposite camps to a brook near which they sat, and refreshed themselves with the cool water and with friendly talk. They conversed about Jesus Christ, his beautiful life, his sweet words, his triumphant death, his immortal promises, his heavenly spirit, and their hearts were knit together. Suddenly the trumpet sounded, and soon these two stalwart men confronted each other with uplifted axe. But could they strike — they who had seen each the other's heart? No. Their weapons fell at their side, they grasped hands, and owned that they were brothers, though the strange strifes of the world had brought them there in conflict.

The deeper we go into the loving heart of Jesus, the more will our differences slough off. May he

be the Master till we shall all become one with him even as he was one with the Father; and we shall have the blessing of his words, "I call you not servants but friends; for all mine are thine, and the glory which I had with the Father I will give to thee."

SERMON VIII.

CHRIST'S MANNER.

"The people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." — MATTHEW vii. 28.

THE reported words of an absent person are but half a revelation of himself unless we know the manner with which they were uttered. For this reason the Gospels are but a semi-transcript of the mind of Christ, and only a dim reflex of the inspiring power of his life. Several circumstances enter into the difficulty of adequately comprehending him.

In the first place the four historians give us no hint as to the words on which our Lord laid the chief stress. We all remember that when, in our school-days, we studied the rules of reading, we had examples of sentences that had several different meanings according to the position of the emphatic word. How much more clearly might we have comprehended the mind of Christ, had we been told on what sentences, or parts of sentences, he laid the chief emphasis.

But that same reserve which led the Evangelists to abstain from all description of our Lord's features, forbade any reference to his style of speak-

ing. We search in vain for such helping sentences as these, or their equivalents, "This sentence was marked with deepest earnestness," or, "This was pronounced with peculiar solemnity." We all feel that such comments would have been alien to the straightforward purpose of the writers.

Accordingly we find nothing of the kind. The text is almost the only place where there is any allusion to his manner, and it is his *manner* that is here referred to, not so much the substance of what he said, as his way of saying it; for he announced spiritual truths with an air that carried conviction with it, and it did not need the support of those endless quotations with which the scribes buttressed up their tottering dogmas.

Another circumstance which increases the difficulty of rightly understanding our Lord's meaning is the abrupt, fragmentary style of address, which was then, and is still common in eastern countries. With us the transitions, the connecting ideas, the expressions of surprise, assent or dissent, praise or censure, are put into words. But it is the oriental fashion to express these by signs — a shake of the head, a shrug of the shoulder, a wave of the hand. Travellers in the East at this day, when they see two persons walking and conversing together, observe that every few moments they stop and face each other, to get a fuller view of those gestures upon which depends a knowledge of what they mean to say.

Even after the province of gesture had been somewhat invaded by language, the old habit of noticing bodily signs is hinted at by the frequent translation of these signs into words. Thus every one remembers how the sacred writers love to paint the physical appearance of the speaker, as in the following expressions: *He lifted up his eyes and said; he opened his mouth and spake; he stretched forth his hand; they looked one upon another.* Such descriptions are found more frequently in the Old Testament than in the New, where the fashion seems expiring, and is retained chiefly in colloquial phrases which throw but little light on any peculiarities of our Lord's manner.

In Leonardo da Vinci's great fresco of the "Last Supper," you may remember how animated is the gesticulation. All the disciples are talking with their hands, and arms, and head; in representing which the artist was true to oriental habits, as undoubtedly our Lord himself was. Did we know exactly what his gestures were, what a help should we have in rightly appreciating the force of his words.

A book has been published on "The Light shed on Classical Literature by a Knowledge of Ancient Gesture." No doubt a study of the same subject, applied to the Scriptures, might give a life-like meaning to many obscure passages.

As we have not been told of Christ's emphasis and gesture, so also nothing is said of the spirit that

rayed out from him. There is with every one, and especially with every marked character, a subtle and mysterious influence of personality, that constitutes the fascination of his presence, and the secret of his power. His consciousness, thought, feelings are revealed by a thousand incidental things, that give varied and indescribable shades of meaning with electric quickness and force. In the case of Jesus, how often a sudden glance of his eye, a peculiar tone of his voice, a sweet smile or a gathering shade, some felicitously chosen word, or some expressive silence, must have given a glimpse into the wonderful depth and intensity of his life, and created around him an atmosphere of inspiring and transforming power? Yet not a word was written about all this.

But while the Evangelists do not give us descriptions of our Lord's manner of speaking, they record a few facts incidentally, and therefore, all the more suggestive, which go to show that there was something very remarkable in that manner, something transcendently impressive,— a manner full as marked as his matter, perhaps even more, arresting immediate notice, and producing instantaneous conviction.

Of course we should have expected this. As he came to reflect brightly among men the love of the Infinite Father, what an imperfect medium of reflection may *words* have been, compared with that divine tenderness that beamed from his

eyes and gave its winning gentleness to the tones of his voice, compared with that interest in every human soul which had never before been conceived of by man, compared with that sublime dignity and awe inspired by his conscious union with God? How must that manner and air have been one of the most natural and vital instruments of his power.

Perhaps you have seen a young person, most likely a young woman, eighteen or twenty years of age, in whom a richly endowed intellectual and emotional nature was allied to one of those delicate organizations, which instantly revealed the play of every thought and feeling, so that the body hardly seemed a veil to the soul, which appeared to stand out visibly before you. The body was not a mask but a mirror. Such a remembrance may help us to conceive of one in whom divinity was not obscured but was "manifest in the flesh," so that the beholder at first glance saw the infinite depths of its wisdom and its love.

Roman Catholic writers, perhaps under a bias in favor of the traditions of the Church, have more frequently referred to the winning grace and divine energy of our Lord's manner, than have Protestants, who have been under an opposite temptation to exaggerate the importance of a scriptural literalism and the printed word. But does it not seem that till we take that manner into account we can hardly comprehend facts found in

all parts of the Gospel records, why Jesus drew such multitudes around him, why the poor and neglected, the sorrow and sin-struck so hung upon his lips, why many at once left everything and followed him, why parables and discourses and apothegms were imprinted so ineffaceably upon their minds, why they felt their hearts burn within them as they talked by the way, why a mere look from him should make Peter weep bitterly, or the bare sight of him should draw forth the exclamation from a pagan centurion, "Truly this was the Son of God."

I am not intent upon saying the obvious thing that Jesus must have had an expression and emphasis perfectly in keeping with his mission. Of course that is true, but my point goes much deeper than that. Till we form some adequate conception of his manner, by reproducing him to our imagination, through a profound sympathy with his style of character, his words are shorn of their power, and are to his meaning only what skeleton bones are to the living body. It is not enough to say that a mere reading of these words will fail to clothe them with life. Even no laborious study if confined to the letter will do this, nor will any intellectual imagination. Only that imagination can do it which is penetrated and inspired by a sympathy with his spirit and life.

Some illustrations may place this in a stronger light; and I take a few almost at random, only

selecting such as involve no dogma, and where the necessity of some reference to our Lord's manner lies on the surface of the record.

No reader of the Gospels can fail to see that necessity in the account there given of the arrest of Jesus. The story as recorded by St. John is in these few and simple words: "Now the betrayer having received a band of men and officers, came with lanterns and torches and weapons to the garden where Jesus was. And Jesus, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth to meet them and said, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backwards and fell to the ground."

Now everybody feels that the whole life of this scene lies behind this verbal account, and is almost unsuggested by the language of the writer. Perhaps no language could reproduce it. Indeed, how can it be reproduced at all save by some ability on our part to conceive that divine self-possession, and fearlessness and majesty, before which those Roman soldiers trembled as guilty things surprised, so that they went backwards and fell to the ground. How evident that he only can comprehend Jesus in this scene, who, by bearing some spiritual likeness to him, can clearly see our Lord's air and manner.

By the same Evangelist we have the account of

our Lord's driving out from the Temple those who had desecrated it by traffic. You all remember the story. The scourge of small cords, used with reference to the sheep and oxen, is no intimation of physical force against the traffickers and money-changers; for a resort to such a weapon against a crowd of people, on a market day, would make nothing but ridicule possible.

The explanation lies in another quarter, — in the supremacy often gained over a multitude by a mind of lofty purpose, and determined look, and burning words; so that when Jesus said to them, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise," there was something in that eye and voice which even those heart-steeled mercenaries were utterly unable to resist. That something who can comprehend but he who has in his own soul what is akin to the courage and omnipotence of right?

As an illustration of another aspect of our Lord's character, and another feature of his manner, we may refer to the story of his interview with the men who brought to him the adulterous woman. They thought that he might say something contrary to the law of Moses, which required death by stoning; and therefore they, guilty themselves, came on the double errand to entrap him and insult the sinful. What was the meaning that shot from the eye of Jesus, and intoned itself in the well-known words of his reply?

I have seen in scores of church pictures in Europe, that different artists have expressed differently the face of Jesus in this scene, some painting it as exposing the subtle guile of these men, and others as scorning their hypocrisy. It may be there was something deeper than art can reach; at any rate, we may well believe there was something holier than is here supposed. Infinite pity for human frailty, expressed in gentle and weeping tones, such as angels might use over a sinner, — this may have disarmed their purpose, and flashed a sudden and awful light into the dark and festering places of their hearts; till, as we read, "convicted in their consciences, they went out one by one."

Perhaps you have heard the anecdote told of a distinguished divine, not many years since deceased, who was in conversation with one who thought the woes pronounced against the Scribes and Pharisees were not exactly in moral harmony with the character of Christ, and who quoted the text, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

Every one knows that there are infelicities in the translation of the passages referred to, and several expressions sound more harshly in our English version than in the original. But the only reply made to the criticism was to read these sentences in something like the probable manner of Christ, in his tone of unspeakable tenderness and

pity. The objector yielded at once, asking, "Was that the way the Saviour spoke?" To these two men what different language the same words, and only to the higher Christian consciousness was the true meaning and manner revealed.

It is the less strange that men should now mistake the emphasis with which Christ uttered particular sentences, when we consider that his own immediate disciples in some instances mistook it. If it seem improbable that we who did not see our Lord's manner, should in any case understand it better than his personal followers who did see it, an example to be now adduced may almost demonstrate that this is the fact.

The case to which I refer is found when Jesus stood near the close of his public ministry, and he was thinking what a change might come over his disciples after he had been withdrawn from them. His special care of them would cease, and it might be that to a degree at least, they would return to their former mode of life. He would guard them against that. He asked, "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them," — and here by his manner intimating that this might be the language of their future actions, — "But now, he that hath a purse let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword let him sell his garment and buy one;" expressing, as I believe, not what he would have

them do, but what he feared they might do; just as a parent may say to his son coming of age, "Hitherto I have taken care of you and saved you from harm; but now take your own course, feel the pressure of difficulties, fall into trials;" — a manner often adopted, and in other cases too by Christ, of expressing a person's future actions as if in the language of present command, — a look of the eye, a tone of the voice, stamping most vividly what we deprecate, and would have him shun.

And yet some of our Lord's hearers, still clinging to the notion of a temporal kingdom, caught at once at these words, *buy a sword*, and said, "Lord, here are two swords." And Jesus replied, "It is enough," — intimating, no doubt, by his manner, that if any of them were thinking of such a thing as his arming his followers, two swords were quite enough for them all.

As some of the first disciples supposed that Christ enjoined carrying deadly weapons, so there have been readers and preachers of the Gospel, even at the present day, who so misunderstand his words. We find in those words another and higher meaning, one not so utterly repugnant to all his other precepts, but in harmony with his gentle spirit of peace, when a profounder Christian consciousness sees his probable emphasis and manner.

The incident called the Feeding of the Five Thousand gives us a hint of something wonderfully

divine in our Lord's manner. I do not regard the miracle as consisting in a supernatural supply of food, but in a power over the sensibilities and will of the multitude. It appears that the disciples had five loaves and two fishes. How much food did all the others have? Perhaps a greater supply for every twelve mouths; so that an equalization might give enough to the needy from the stores of the over-supplied. It was something, as I conceive, in our Lord's manner that wrought this miracle of equalization, something in his divine disinterestedness and generosity, in his godlike benignity and grace, that touched all hearts, and melted them into one.

It is doubtful whether the scene occurred twice; but it made a profound impression, as it may still, if we look at it not as an inconceivable prodigy, but a moral miracle, subduing selfishness, opening the fountains of generosity, by a godlike beauty and grace.

Once more, the need of some reference to our Lord's manner is seen in the interpretation of his parables. Most of the mistakes here made arise from overlooking the one salient point which he designed to illustrate, and which, no doubt, he clearly indicated by his voice, or eye, or hand. Each parable must be studied as a group of statuary. An artist bends over such a group absorbed in profound meditation. He examines the history of the scene represented, the moment of time selected,

the thought to which everything was plastic, and when he is in possession of the *motive* of the group, the marble palpitates with life. These parables are but dead and cold stone till we conceive the true manner of their utterance, and then the group is instinct with spirit and life.

But I must not any longer dwell on these hints. They tell us what divine light and power once flooded the homes and hill-sides of Judea, just as a few scattered boulders tell the geologist of the mighty river that once filled the whole valley, and bore down everything before it. These Gospels are like a grand picture drawn by an inspired hand, but of which we have only the outlines. The filling up and the coloring of the picture are the work of a Christian imagination, reproducing Christ himself in his emphasis and looks.

The divine grace and beauty of his manner must have constituted his most striking distinction. A sight of him revealed at once God and heaven to the beholder.[1] Those who saw him believed he could do anything. Probably in some cases, they imputed to him as miracles what were perfectly natural events.

Let not such a concession disturb any of our

[1] "Speaking he gave a radiant smile, such as seems might open Paradise," said an old Italian poet; but no translation does justice to his words: —

> "Gittò parlando un lampeggiante riso
> Tal che sembrò s'aprisse il Paradiso."

minds. The Evangelists wrote emotionally, and not as naturalists and philosophers. It was through the medium of their boundless love of his wonderful personality that they saw everything; and the more miracles they ascribed to him, the more fitting was their history, as it seemed to them, to his superhuman grace. Let us see in that grace his unapproached preëminence, compared with which a prodigy more or less is of small account.

Better than all his miracles, though he removed mountains, better than all the testimonies of history, though we had libraries at our tongue's end, better than all the arguments of the learned, though we had the greatest intellect ever known among men, would have been one moment's sight of Jesus. We could not doubt that he was from God whom we saw to be full of a heavenly grace.

A deeper Christian consciousness will continually recognize a deeper and deeper meaning in the divine records of his life. They are not to pass away in all this multiplication of books and progress of literature; they will never grow old, but the more profoundly they are interpreted by the spirit of Jesus in the soul, the more closely will they lead us to Him who spake as never man spake, and at whose manner of utterance the people were astonished.

SERMON IX.

THE TWELVE THRONES.

"Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." — MATTHEW xix. 28.

WE have laid aside in modern times the custom for a great teacher to select certain men to attend him from place to place, that they may be moulded by his conversation and character.

Climate has had something to do with this change. In Palestine, Greece, Italy, teachers and pupils could make the hill-sides and groves their school; but in our colder latitudes they must have buildings to shelter them.

The modern large use of books has contributed to the same result. In ancient times instruction was chiefly oral and conversational, and could be given while journeying on foot from town to town, or from mountain to lake. With us the existence of libraries, and other apparatus of education, has localized instruction.

Accordingly, in our day, great teachers are found where there are lecture-rooms and libraries. Pupils go there. Over here in Cambridge there is a teacher renowned for his knowledge of natural history, and young men interested in that

branch of knowledge, throng around him. There are medical lectures of great ability in Boston, and theological lectures of a high order in Andover, and students resort to the distinguished professors referred to.

In former days the same end was reached, but by other means. It was in the open air, in the grove of Academus in Athens, that Plato was attended by sympathizing followers, who caught up every word he uttered; while Aristotle's instructions, equally oral and conversational, were given in the same city, when he was walking near the Lyceum.

These men lived four hundred years before Christ. Their fashion of peripatetic and colloquial instruction survived for twelve or fifteen centuries. At length the establishment of universities gave fixed places of education.

But even after universities had been founded, a man great in any one line had his pupils who attended him wherever he went. The renowned sculptor, Michael Angelo, had constantly about him, in his house and studio, many disciples who eagerly listened to his conversation, and carefully noted the ways of his art. The great painter, Raphael, was followed wherever he went by many young men, enthusiastic admirers of the artist, and some of them were so moulded by his genius that their works have passed for his. The eminent architects of the Middle Ages, who reared

the cathedrals of Europe, had their personal followers. They themselves were the master-masons, while their disciples were the entered apprentices and fellow-craft.

Even within the memory of the present generation, celebrated lawyers, and doctors, and ministers, had many professional students; and some think that this private instruction was better than that now afforded by public professional schools.

Jesus followed the fashion of his times in selecting certain men to be his disciples, and to attend him from place to place. Now let us see where he found them.

If here in New England a great mind had some fresh views in philosophy or religion which he desired to plant deeply in the hearts and consciences of a few earnest men, I doubt if he would go to Boston to find them, though Boston be the place of the highest culture of New England. Everywhere in the great centres of intellectual activity the best minds are, for the most part, by birth, training, family influence, party or sect, already committed to the prevailing opinions; so that the supposed teacher would have a double task to perform — to put the old ideas out before he could put the new ideas in. As a general thing, the men of free, fresh, and strong minds do not come from these great centres of population.

Thus how few of the leading men of Boston were born in Boston! They were born back in

the country. They came down from the Berkshire Hills, or from the shadows of the White Hills, or the Green Mountains; and though they were as angular as the stones of the country, and were not all rounded smooth like the stones of the sea-side, they were for this reason more individual, they were more ready to take up new ideas, and these will stand out more distinctly and omnipotently in their minds. The intellect of the great cities would soon stagnate, would become the mere reservoir of hereditary opinions, and an unyielding conservatism, were it not for the continual importation of fresh country freedom and life. It is not the country *water* only that the city needs to have brought to it; it needs the country life as well.

Jesus might have gone down to Jerusalem and selected his followers among the leaders of the great sects that then wrangled in that capital. But it is not likely that one of them could have taken in his Gospel in its simplicity and entireness; or if comprehended, it is not likely that one of them could have kept it from being fatally mixed up with his own previous opinions; or if unmixed, it is not likely that the literary training of one of them would have permitted him to give a plain, unvarnished report of what he had seen and heard.

What an illustration of all this we have in the case of Josephus. Josephus was a Jerusalem Jew,

a contemporary of the Apostles, descended from one of the first families of the city, and accomplished in the best literature of his times. His stilted sentences, the grandiloquent speeches he puts into the mouths of those of whom he writes, make him one of the most tedious of all authors. It is impossible that he could have written such chapters as those which record the raising of Lazarus, or the cure of the man born blind; it is impossible that he could have reported, in anything like the wonderful charm in which we now have them, the Sermon on the Mount, or the Parable of the Prodigal Son. He could as well have written the "Iliad," or the "Paradise Lost."

There is no reason to doubt that Josephus had a mind as open and candid as any one living in Jerusalem at his time. Yet he could not comprehend Christianity. Right under his eyes events were taking place which were the most wonderful and pregnant recorded in history, yet he could not see their significance. A new religion, which none of his family or sect patronized, he hardly condescended to notice; for it is a matter of doubt whether the one sentence in his book referring to Jesus was written by him or not. If genuine, it is most remarkable for its diplomatic non-committalism. He was a true child of the city.

Jesus took his disciples, all but one, from the up-country place called Galilee. It was called Galilee of the Gentiles because it had an unusual

commingling of people of different nationalities. As a consequence of its position and population, the conventionalisms of Jerusalem, the sacerdotal authority of Jerusalem, and the influence of its great sects, the Sadducees and Pharisees, were there scarcely felt. It had a brogue and uncouthness of manners often ridiculed in Jerusalem; but it had also more freedom of thought, more openness to conviction, accompanied by the simple tastes and pure habits of men who got their living chiefly as fishermen on the beautiful lake of their country.

If you know some town in Vermont, on the borders of some of the beautiful lakes of that State, — a town where life is free from the prejudices and corrupting influences of Boston or New York, yet where thought is active, and minds are open, and tastes are simple, and morals pure, — it may help you to comprehend the position of Galilee.

Now let us see whom Jesus selected for his followers.

Though not born in Galilee Jesus had lived in that region from a child. He knew the chief men of the place. No doubt he had had long talks with them. We are deceived by the brief way in which, in the Gospels, the calling of his disciples is described. "Follow me," he said, and it is added, "immediately they left their nets and followed him." But we must understand this of the final notice to attend him. It is not unlikely that

for months and for years he had been preparing their minds for this step, and had obtained their consent to unite their fortunes with his when the proper moment arrived.

What makes this more probable is the fact that a consciousness of the work to which he was called dawned on the mind of Christ very early. When he was but twelve years old he felt that he "must be about his Father's business." Between that time and the commencement of his ministry was a period of eighteen years. Not a hint is given us of what he was doing all that time; but no doubt he had his eye upon the men around him.

He saw the ardor of Peter, and felt that he would make a valuable follower if his impulsiveness could be toned down and governed. He saw the gentle traits of John, and knew that there was a nature in which might be seen some of the most winning graces of his Gospel. He saw the judicial mind of James, the crystal clearness and unselfishness of Matthew, the calm, quiet demeanor of some older men, Simon and Andrew, who would bring important elements to the school he was about to gather around him. How interesting it would have been if we had been told of the care with which Jesus singled out these men, and of the repeated talks he had had with them.

But the extreme brevity of the Gospel narratives did not admit any reference to these prepara-

tory steps. We can supply the gap in our knowledge only by reflecting upon what must have happened in such a case as this. Mohammed spent twelve years of earnest talk before he attached a single person to his cause. And his was a religion of lust and blood, to which men, in those barbarous ages, could more easily be converted than to a gospel of peace and love.

It is pleasing to think that Jesus did not find his task so difficult. He had better materials to deal with. Above all, to aid his success, he had the divinity of his mission and character, raying out in his youthful look, and voice, and manners, and life.

At length he had the consent of a selected few, who stand ready to leave all and attend him as soon as he tells them that the fitting hour had come. Henceforth for three years, if that be the duration of our Lord's ministry, they journey with him, and talk with him, and fast with him, and pray with him. They are pupils under his instruction. He is president, professors, tutors, everything in this college. The lake-sides of Galilee and the hill-sides of Judea are his lecture-rooms. The farmer sowing his grain, the traveller waylaid between Jerusalem and Jericho, the younger son wasting his substance in riotous living, two men building houses, one on the sand and the other on a rock, the rains, the dews, the sky,

the lilies of the field, the birds of the air, — these and such as these were his text-books.

Did his disciples improve under his personal instruction?

That is a great question. I should like to gather up all the indications of the moral transformation of these men. True, it was slow work. How often the patience of Jesus must have been tried! Even with the freest minds he could select, he was doomed to feel the inveteracy of Jewish prejudice, and the invincibleness of Jewish obstinacy. It only makes us wonder how it was that Jesus, a Jew himself, got out of all that. What a miracle to see a man emancipate himself from the temper of his race, and the spirit of his age, and get away from that mountain-load of superstition beneath which everybody around him was pressed down!

The best proof that the pupils of Christ came to be essentially like their Master is furnished by comparing their writings with the words of Jesus. We have the Gospels of Matthew and John, the sermons of Peter, and the Epistles of the same Apostle, with those also of James and John, and Jude. Thus more than one third of the disciples were authors who have bequeathed to us their works. We see the sort of consciousness with which they were written, and can compare them with the words of their Master. They do not set forth, in substance or spirit, a Gospel differing from that of Christ, but substantially the same word, and the same spirit of truth and grace.

They did get into the mind of Jesus. They did come to comprehend his thought, and to be inspired by his great, loving soul. They did come to see his truth disentangled — not wholly, for that has not yet taken place, but to a great extent at least — from their hereditary customs and prepossessions, and to renounce the hope of a temporal kingdom, though that stuck the strongest in their minds. They did come to feel the divine beauty and power of Christ's life, and to count the loss of everything else as nothing, if they might gain that.

So it was with all of them except Judas Iscariot, the only one of the Twelve who was not a Galilean. Doubtless Jesus knew his character from the first, and was not unwilling to have one with him, who, after he had seen all Christ's most intimate life, had no confession to make but this, that he had betrayed "innocent blood."

To encourage his disciples, Jesus, in a few remarkable words, gives them a glimpse of the position they shall occupy in the coming ages of the world, "Ye who have followed me in this new creating of all things, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." What does this mean?

To sit on a throne judging was the Hebrew phrase to express the possession of a delegated commanding influence, like the governors or

judges of a province under the emperor; and by the *twelve tribes of Israel* was often denoted the whole world, as the Jews held that all the world would ultimately be numbered with those tribes. The meaning of the text then is, "Ye shall be vice-royal governors of the world."

But how is this? These humble fishermen of Galilee kings? Such men as Peter, and John, and James, and Matthew to govern the world? It seems absurd. How contemptible their names by the side of those of Cæsar, and Charlemagne, and Cromwell, and Napoleon! In the world's history, compared with these great rulers, those illiterate Jews — what are they?

When we ask this, let us remember that beside the kingdom of armies, and forts, and ships of war, and dynasties, and thrones, there is a kingdom in the world of *thought*, an empire of ever-living truths, before which armies, and forts, and thrones are the shifting playthings of a day.

If you enter the Chapel of King Henry the Seventh, in Westminster Abbey, you see the effigies of the kings and queens of England; and among them that of Queen Elizabeth, who gave her name to one of the most brilliant ages in English history. As you stand there in the silence of that charnel-house, and amid all that mouldering earth of royalty, you feel what transient pageants these kings are, and that Queen Bess with the rest of them is dead, dead as the dust, all dead long ago,

and nothing of her now lives. But a puny child, born at the beginning of her reign, and of whom every one doubted whether it had stamina enough to grow up, saw and stated certain principles of philosophy, which have revolutionized modern inquiry, and which, pointing out the track of all true progress, still live all over the enlightened world, and will live as long as science and civilization endure. What a mightier sovereign has Bacon been than she who is now nothing but dust!

Three hundred years ago a monk found by chance in his convent a copy of the Bible. By the side of the kings that then filled the thrones of Europe he was a helpless and insignificant man. But by the study of that Bible he set in motion a few cardinal truths, which have tumbled down crowns and thrones as baubles; and what a king in the world of ideas has Martin Luther been!

Less than a hundred years ago a few men assembled at Philadelphia, plain, unlettered men, brought up here in the woods of North America; and they published a Declaration of Independence, the principles of which are working in all the enlightened nations of the world, and are proving that Franklin, and Jefferson, and Adams, were kings in the empire of thought; kings before whom many a crowned head has bowed down, and others ere long must submit.

Speak not of the obscurity of those first disciples of Christ. The truths they received from their

Master, penetrating and transforming their own souls, so that they gave them forth to the world in the freshness and power with which Jesus uttered them, these have made them kings and priests to the world. The customs of life, the thoughts and ways of mankind, the institutions of society, the principles of government, the thrones of empire, they are moulding after their Master's ideal. Every age as it passes by exalts them to a higher seat of influence, and is making more manifest the truth of the words, "Ye shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

SERMON X.

DOING.

'Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?'
LUKE vi. 46.

IF any one were asked to designate the most salient feature of the Christian religion, could he do it better than to describe it as a practical religion? See how it lays the great stress on what a man does, not on what he says; on being, not on seeming; on his character, not on his professions; on his daily life, not on occasional ceremonies.

True, it does not overlook the inner man of the heart, the great central beliefs and principles of the soul, which are to all human character what the beams and sleepers are to a house, that on which everything is built, and without which there would be no solidity and endurance. To disregard all reference to a man's innermost convictions and motives would be acting like him who should undertake to repair a faulty watch merely by tinkering its dial and its hands. Nothing effectual is done until its wheels and spring are set right. In like manner, of all empirical and foolish conceits there is none like that which looks no deeper than the veneering of a superficial morality.

But here is seen that good sense, that practical sagacity, which distinguishes the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Why do we look to a man's beliefs and motives? Is it enough when these are right? Are we satisfied with the watch whose wheels and springs can be proved to be the best in the world? There must be some working evidence of this excellence. The hands of the time-keeper must demonstrate a useful result, and do it continually, and do it unfailingly, or the instrument is worthless.

And just so is it with the Christian. No doubt you tell me something important when you say that his inner works are good, his principles sound, his beliefs scriptural, his motives evangelical. If they are so, I expect to see the proofs of this in his daily life, in his uprightness and integrity, in his justice and honor, in the charity and sweetness of his temper. And if I do not find these, if I find craft, selfishness, scorn, and bigotry instead, who does not see that the character is a monstrous lie to the profession, and there must be some stupendous defect within?

Amid all the complaints of modern neglect of sacred things, and prevailing irreverence and irreligion, it must be admitted, I think, that this gospel method of judging men by their deeds and not by their words, is far more common now than it has been, so far as we know, at any former period. I was talking the other day with a bright-minded

man ninety-three years old; and I ventured to ask him how these times compared, in point of moral character, with those which he remembered as a boy.

You know how common it is for aged people to complain of modern degeneracy, and to think that nothing is equal to the good old times. It is curious to observe how this complaint reappears in every generation; so that, if it be well founded, the world has been continually growing worse. No doubt the explanation is that we are all deceived through the ignorance of our early years. We find the world to be not so good as we at first imagined it; and though it is continually improving under our eyes, nevertheless by our advancing knowledge we see it more and more below the ideal of our younger days; and hence the old complain.

But the patriarch to whom I refer did not complain. Said he, "Three or four generations ago, professions, forms, conventionalisms, outside pretenses, and shows, had a sway of which we can now hardly conceive. In this respect our times are infinitely better than those. What do we care for the image and superscription, if there be the ring of the true metal?"

Who can doubt that my venerated friend was right? If a man has nothing but an approved creed, a punctilious performance of ceremonies, officious godly pretensions, and a sanctimonious

look, he has fallen on the wrong epoch for him. Never could he do less business on such a capital. A keen, sagacious, practical age pierces in its look right through all his outside shows. It asks what is he as a man, what is his daily life, what good does he do, what fruit of a kind and beneficent life does he bring forth? And if it finds no good answer to these questions, it strips off his broad phylacteries, and leaves him in tatters, an object of contempt, and the verdict of all true men is — served him right.

And what I say is, that all this is more in accordance with the practical spirit of the Gospel than the temper of any preceding time. No doubt our age has many faults to be laid to its charge. It is greatly in love with physical good, and material prosperity. It has too little sympathy with the religious customs of former days. Churches are rarely crowded as they used to be; and reverence and faith have too much given place to railways and factories. No one can deny all this, and who does not regret it?

But there is a compensation. It would be senseless not to recognize it, and ingratitude not to be thankful for it. I have no fears for the final interests of piety and worship. They rest on our human nature, and this is not about to desert us. Let us be assured that they will by and by regain their hold on the public heart. In a period of transition from one set of traditions to another there

may be for a while a wide-spread indifference; but the deep wants of our common humanity cannot long be smothered. The present neglect of the forms of public devotion is in part the reaction of a former extravagant estimate of their importance. A better judgment will take its place. Things will find their just level, and the pendulum oscillating too far one way will return.

No doubt it is in part, also, the result of an absorbing materialism, not long, we hope, to hold its usurped dominion. We are told that a legend, still current in Constantinople, relates that when the Turks took that city, in 1453, and broke down the doors of St. Sophia, a Christian priest, officiating at that moment, hastily took the consecrated vessels, and walking down one of the aisles with solemn steps, vanished in the solid wall. The sound of his voice is still faintly heard within the masonry where he offers his prayers; and when St. Sophia shall be restored to Christian worship, as the legend says, the wall shall open of its own accord, and the immured priest, issuing from his retreat, shall finish at the altar the service began four centuries ago.

Let us not doubt that the time will come when the materialism of this age, which has so much overrun everything, and seized even our churches, will give place to psalm and prayer, now only indifferently heard, but then to resume their former interest and power.

Meanwhile, what an immense gain to throw off the load of former shams and hypocrisies, to be able to pierce through solemn pretenses and to expose the hollow within, to see men as they are, to judge their principles by their fruits, and to know that it is nothing if they say, "Lord, Lord," while neglecting to do the things which have been commanded?

This gain is so great, so sure, of such immense and immeasurable advantage, that I think that we can well put up with much reaction against forms and rites for the sake of securing it; knowing as we do that progress is never uniform, but rather by jets and springs, first in one direction and then in another, and glad that the world, on the whole, is coming to be more in sympathy with the spirit of him who uttered the words of the text.

And yet how blind some men seem to be to the fact of progress in this direction. They cannot see God working to-day, working in the hearts of the people of our times. Yes, working in our own hearts, working underneath all our eagerness for modern improvements, and material prosperity, and physical good, and advancing science and art, here carrying on one of the divine designs appointed for this age of the world, and in its place just as important, just as godlike, as any design unfolded in the ages gone by. Such men, with owlish vision and gravity, see better in the dark, and admire nothing till distance lends enchantment

to the view. They give all manner of bad names to the age in which we live, they wish their lot had been cast in the better fortune of some former period, and praise with extravagant laudations what they call "the ages of faith."

But let us well understand what those ages were. What if the entire body of the people then accepted all that their priests taught them, nor failed in one point of their ritual, thronged their churches with uncounted multitudes, and went through the services with the promptness and regularity of a military drill? Can we forget that the mass of the people were nearly as ignorant as the brutes, that nothing but force had sway, that violence and lust on all sides prevailed, and that of the numberless institutions which now give to society at large education, culture, refinement, some knowledge of the laws of our moral and spiritual nature, hardly a solitary one was then known?

It is to stultify one's self to praise those times as better than ours, times when outward, artificial things, and not character, were thought to secure salvation, when a man's professions were more than his conduct, the sign of the cross more than virtue, the bending of the knee, the burning of incense, more than pure and holy living.

Thank God, that is not the temper of this age. It looks to sincere, honest, substantial goodness as the one thing needful. Those who would substi-

tute something else for this, those who are bewildered by the upheaval of old ways, and look back, and sigh for a return to the shrines which the world has outgrown, may for a while find encouragement among the wavering and timid; but the great law of progress will have its own course, and they and their works will find the fulfillment of the words that "on whom this stone shall fall it will grind them to powder." Goodness, daily practical goodness, the age is coming to have an irrepressible consciousness that this is the one thing needful. And it will honor such goodness wherever it may be found. It may be in those who do not worship as we worship, or believe as we believe; but it will honor it just as Christ recognized it, and praised it in a pagan centurion, and a despised Samaritan.

I was reading this last week, in a French newspaper, an account of an event not yet translated for any of our American journals. The French Academy bestows every year what it denominates the "Prize of Virtue," given to the person who is thought to have performed the most beautiful and noble act. Its bestowal is a great event, and its reception is a great honor. This year it was conferred upon a woman, unmarried, of seventy years of age. What had she done to merit it?

She is a school-teacher, of singular winning and effective influence, who for fifty years has not been absent from her school for one single day;

and who, for those fifty years has employed most of her nights as the affectionate and devoted nurse of the sick, and throughout her village she has made a revolution in the way of taking care of the sick, introducing changes in clothing, diet, treatment, which have saved scores of lives.

The report assigning the prize to this woman was made by M. Sainte-Beuve, the eloquent French author and critic, who said, "It is easy to pronounce that word charity, and it is easy to enjoy a festival of the Academy. But think of those toils and sacrifices, those patient days, those watchful nights of fifty years, and think what a vast contribution of good this humble woman made to humanity, while thousands rolling in wealth, perhaps muttering their prayers superstitiously, lead lives that are good for nothing."

And this woman — was she Catholic or Protestant, was she Episcopalian or Methodist, did she sign a creed, or did she belong to the sect of no creed? It is not named. It is not once thought of. In the ages of faith I fear she would have fared badly, good as she was, had she been a Hebrew, or a Waldensian. All her meek and patient self-sacrifices would have passed for nothing, if they had not been done under the banner of the approved Church. We in these times see that she was a true disciple of him who judges the tree by its fruits, and who himself went about doing good.

Gentle and faithful follower of the Lord Jesus Christ! Thy humble name, till lately unheard of beyond the obscure place of thy toil, may be mentioned even in this distant land; the memory of thy faithful goodness may be as incense on the air of this parish church; and Rosalie Marion may have the praise of her, named by the great Master, who had done what she could.

The simplicity of the leading object of the Gospel, the stress it lays on the one point of a practically good life, appear in striking contrast with other systems of religion. An old Rabbinical legend says that the law of Moses contained six hundred and thirteen precepts, counting both the positive and the negative. This was in the childhood of the chosen people. To children you must prescribe everything. It is only when they have grown up and got some culture, that they can classify, and reduce details to principles. Then they may relax the bondage of six hundred and thirteen commandments, and fix upon the few great truths that underlie them.

This is exactly what happened. Jesus said that all the law and the prophets were in the two commandments of love to God and love to man. A great process in simplifying this — from six hundred and thirteen to two! But it took more than a thousand years to reach it. I dare say there were men who thought Christ's statement was too radical and rationalistic. They probably exclaimed,

"What! not a word about the great historical doctrines and the dear old rites that have come down to us through so many generations?" But I think that men of open and generous culture must see in Christ's analysis a proof of the sound and sincere action of his mind. He felt the desire which every man of thought feels to get to the bottom of the subject, the great central truth, simple and grand, around which everything revolves; and he found it in the practical precepts on which he laid so much stress.

If we only remember that practical goodness is the great end to which the gospel points, how many things may we see in this age that merit our highest praise as exemplifications of the Christian spirit. What, after all, are these efforts to lift up the wretched classes that vegetate and fester in the shadow of our boasted civilization, but the continuation in other ways of the beautiful and blessed deeds of Jesus — works of love suited to our age as his works of love were suited to his age. Those who organize and direct these operations compose so many churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, churches not manipulated in the old forms, but doing grandly the old work.

In our late terrible civil war, what were the Sanitary and Christian Commissions but the most effective churches of the Redeemer; and every agent of theirs, going to the field of battle, carrying physical relief and Christian cheer, amid the

awful carnage, what was he but a minister of Him who came to save men's lives — a minister ordained if not by imposition of hands, but, better, by the Holy Ghost, and just so far as he had the right spirit in his soul, standing in the true Apostolical Succession?

And so later, when millions of a long-abused race had been thrown upon the care of a Christian people, what were the thousands of teachers who went to give the simplest elements of instruction to them, but so many Evangelists sent forth to prepare the way, to fill every valley, and make the crooked straight, and the rough smooth, and prepare a highway for our God? All these beneficent works, just so far as they are pervaded by a spirit of practical goodness, are they not Christ's works, their agencies Christian agencies, they themselves churches of Jesus Christ, organized not after the old forms, but in the true spirit?

I think it becomes the regularly acknowledged Church of Christ, instead of mourning that so many desert its normal temples and rites, to rejoice that its work is done in these abnormal forms, and to have cheerful faith that by and by, if we can keep a Christian temper towards them, many engaged in these humanitarian charities will come rejoicing to the ancient and beloved fold, though they stand aloof from it now.

The newspapers of the last month have been full of accounts of the exhibitions of horticultural

and agricultural societies. It is the full, ripened, precious *fruit* of our trees and gardens and farms, that we assemble to note. We do not call these societies together in the early spring when the leaves first appear, nor yet a month later when the blossoms put forth their beauty. We wait for the fruit, and when that comes, we rejoice over the work done, the end reached, the reward attained, the product garnered, without which all else has come short of its design.

So it is with Him whom we call our Teacher and Guide. He, too, looks for the fruit, and will praise and reward nothing but the fruit, the fruit of a true, useful, rounded, completed, holy life. We come here to join in the devout prayers of the Church, and to send up a sweet hymn of praise. But all this is but the means to a higher end, and that is to have his spirit to shine through and through our daily life, to have his loving temper, and to do his blessed work. We will not forget the Eucharist at his table; but to be Christ-like in our lives is the Eucharist with which he will be most pleased.

SERMON XI.

EFFECT OF DOING.

"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." — JOHN vii. 17.

A CHANGE in a man's manner of living often brings after it an unexpected change in his feelings. It will silently have more influence than all your logic and persuasion. You may argue with him and produce no conviction, and entreat him and win no consent; for he has a thousand objections at his tongue's end, and it may be that circumstances around him act like a cast-iron frame, and hold him tight as a vice.

But if you can lift him out of these circumstances you may find he has new fountains of feeling unsealed, new desires and aims springing up, by which the whole man may be gradually and unconsciously moulded anew.

What a change is sometimes produced by so small a matter as a change in one's dress. It has been said that every man is good-natured on the morning on which he puts on a clean shirt. At any rate, if you take off a man's soiled and tattered garments, and array him in new clothes, he has a sense of self-respect, and a motive to good be-

havior, to which he was a stranger before. He feels that he is somebody, and can appear as an equal among respectable folks, and must maintain a character accordingly. All this makes him open to good impressions which would have been powerless while he was in his dirty rags. A change in his manner of living has changed all his tastes and aims.

So also what new feelings follow the acquisition of property, even if little in amount. The revelations of savings institutions on this point are instructive. Men who felt that they never could get on in the world, that the Fates were against them, that there was no use in trying, that all your encouraging arguments and flattering words are absolutely thrown away, and that therefore they would continue to spend recklessly what little they had got, such men have been turned completely about when they had a hundred dollars to their credit in the savings-bank. They have become prudent, careful, painstaking, denying themselves foolish expenditures so as to add to their little store. This slight change has given them something to live for beside immediate indulgence. They have new hopes before them, larger and wiser plans, and are open to elevating influences to which they were iron-clad before. A change in their mode of life has changed all their tastes and aims.

Then again, what purified sympathies and better

resolutions dawn on a man if he has removed from a filthy and shabby dwelling to a good home. Here is the call for improved lodging-houses. A poor family in some rickety and tumble-down tenement is in nearly a hopeless state as long as it stays there. The continual sight of squalor and misery benumbs all energy. They are in no condition to appreciate the pictures you draw of a better life which they might lead. Your words will be vain. But take them out of their wretched environment, put them into clean and comfortable apartments, and, without your saying a word, this alteration of their lot will do what you desire. It will awaken human sympathies and aspirations where there appeared nothing but animal instincts before. A change in their mode of life has changed all their feelings and aims.

How often we meet with illustrations of the same truth in turning over the leaves of biographies. In one case we may find that a man has been lifted out of the rut of a careless and wicked life simply by removal from one town to another. He had a set of companions who were always dragging him down, men who, by their banter and ridicule, kept him on their own low level, and turned off as if from a coat of mail all the most pointed weapons of reason and conscience and religion. But in his new residence he found new intimacies. The aspirations of his better nature, no longer repressed and scorned, had a chance to

grow, and they made themselves felt, and he became a man. A change in his mode of life had changed all his habits and plans.

Perhaps we shall find in another case that an appointment to some position of duty and trust has waked a man up to courage and effort. He had had no faith in himself, no high aims which he *must* pursue, no exalted ends which he *must* struggle to reach, and friends mourned over the apathy and sluggishness of a nature which they felt sure was tuned to higher issues. But some office he held acceptably and creditably awakened his ambition. It revealed to him the fact that he could do something and be something. He found hopes and plans dawning on his mind which a few months before would have been absolutely inconceivable. These put him on his mettle, and led him from one attainment to another, till he reached a high place of usefulness and honor. A change in his mode of life changed all his feelings and aspirations.

I once knew a young man of fine endowments and education who had shown such a decided lurch for a rowdy and dissipated life, that all who knew him predicted an infamous career. A fall that he received made him a bed-ridden cripple for life. It took him to his home — a place where he had hitherto spent only the few reluctant hours of sleep. It took him to the society of his sisters, with whose gentle and refined tastes he had had but little sym-

pathy. It took him to the instruction of books, which had been nothing but a bore. It took him to self-reflection, which he had done all he could to drown. Feelings and aspirations began to arise which he did not dream that his nature possessed.

During the years of his somewhat protracted life, his bedside was a place where his friends loved to commune with one, who to large attainments of knowledge, added the sweet and beautiful traits of Christian faith. He used to say that the fall that crippled him was the best blessing he had ever received; and he gave another illustration of the truth I have been setting forth, that a change in one's mode of life often brings after it a complete internal revolution.

I will add only one other illustration of the same fact. It has often been noticed what a change is wrought in the foreigner, the Irishman, the Scotchman, the German, the Norwegian, merely by his becoming a citizen of this country. In his native land very likely he was nobody, and always would be nobody. Old petrified institutions kept him down, kept him poor, kept him ignorant, kept him humiliated in a degraded social caste.

Here, on the other hand, in the United States, he has a thousand chances of rising. He becomes interested in public affairs. He has himself some influence in directing them. The ballot-box is an educator, and it would not be easy to overrate the educating influence of American institutions and

American life. It inspires him with self-respect, encourages him to obtain information, wakes up his nature, makes a new man of him. In the old country you might have argued with him forever without producing a hundredth part of the effect which has followed from his change of residence; for a change in his mode of life has revolutionized his feelings and aspirations.

Let me come now to apply these illustrations, to unfold the meaning of the text, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

I understand these words to set forth an exact scientific truth, precisely like that which is obvious in all the examples I have adduced. A change in a man's life, by which it is made Christian, will carry with it changes in his feelings and convictions which will preclude all doubt. A good life unseals the fountains of new tastes and aspirations. A good life gives the dawn of new hopes, and proposes broader and higher plans. A good life wakes up a man's nature, inspires self-respect, encourages self-discipline, places him in a condition where his highest faculties swing easily, and work to the greatest advantage. A good life takes a man out of the environment that is pulling him down and keeping him back, and shows him how he can make the most of himself. A good life is continually disclosing a view of something better, and kindling desires to be something better, forgetting

what is behind, and reaching forward to what is before. A good life gives the ability to see the infinite beauty and beneficence of instructions to whose significance one was stone-blind before. A good life carries with it its own evidence, and makes a man feel, to the roots of his consciousness and experience, in every beating of his heart, in every fibre of his body, to the very marrow of his bones, that Christ's spiritual truths are the spiritual laws of this universe, and are backed by God's wisdom and power.

Country people have a saying, that if you clear off the primitive forest and cultivate the soil, fresh springs of water will come to the surface as if by the touch of sunshine. In like manner if we cut down certain other tall growths, and grub out certain other roots, and give a Christian culture to our nature, and let the warm sunshine of God's love fall upon it, there will be unexpected springs of emotions and conviction flowing in our souls.

The new instincts that grow with every well-ordered life are the antennæ of the soul by which it will feel its way, and feel it sure. They are the aroma of our nature to which Christian woman has ever been more responsive than man; and if reason be the staff by which we steady our steps, and logic be the crutches by which we hobble along when crippled, our spiritual instincts are the wings by which we mount and soar.

Nor is it difficult to state what some of these

instincts are. A good man sees by instinct the infinite purity and verity of the Divine law. He sees by instinct the essential benignity and loveableness of the Father of the Universe. He sees by instinct the wonderful adaptedness of the precepts of Jesus to promote the best good of the world. He sees by instinct the sure and certain hope of a life beyond the grave. I repeat it, he sees all these by spiritual instincts which a good life has opened in the depths of his nature, and which nothing but a good life can unseal. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.

I shall conclude this sermon by naming a suggestive fact which I have never seen in print, and which was narrated to me by a venerable friend,[1] long since deceased, who was present at the time referred to, and himself heard the words I am about to quote.

When Dr. Franklin lived in Paris, my friend accompanied him one evening to a club of *savans*, where a discussion arose on the question, What is the strongest evidence of the truth of the Christian religion? One appealed to prophecy, another to

[1] Benjamin Vaughan, LL. D., born in Jamaica in 1751; educated in England; a friend of Dr. Priestley and Dr. Franklin; bearer to London of the treaty of peace, signed in 1783 in Paris, between Great Britain and the United States at the close of the Revolutionary War; a member of Parliament in 1792; came to America n 1797, and died in Hallowell, Me., in 1835.

miracles, a third to the history of the transmission of the religion from age to age, and a fourth to that incommunicable air of truthfulness and honesty which lies upon all the records of the life of Christ. At length Dr. Franklin's opinion was asked. His brief and neat reply was well remembered: "I think that man has the strongest conviction of its truth who most sincerely obeys its words."

SERMON XII.

INTROSPECTION.

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." — MATTHEW v. 21, 22.

A SPIRITUAL vision, purged by holy living, soon reveals to us the state of the inner man, and forces us to judge it by quite other standards than those used by the world.

The world measures the enormity of sins by their outward and visible effect. If we see them produce some terrible result under our eyes, we are startled and appalled; but if their work be all within, out of sight, we may have no alarm at their doings, perhaps even no consciousness of their existence, although they may eat tenfold deeper into the soul, and imply a tenfold greater measure of depravity and guilt.

Here is the explanation of the text. It may be presented in another form in some such words as these, which we may suppose Jesus to have used: "Your law has told you that murder shall meet with a fearful retribution, and it shall; but I say

unto you that guilt is not measured by the outward act. In the sight of Him who searches the heart the deepest sins may exist, though they lead to no outward act. Causeless anger is the very spirit of murder, and shall meet with the murderer's doom. Habitually to speak or even to think of your brother as a worthless creature, coolly to cast him off as an apostate wretch, this implies a deliberation, and settled choice of sin, which may carry its guilt far deeper into the soul than the sudden outbreak of a murderer's passion, and shall be visited with a punishment even more terrible than his."

I do not propose to dwell upon the particular examples here named. They were pertinent and striking to unfold the principle which Jesus wished to set forth, and for this purpose they are pertinent and striking still. But the principle itself is what we are chiefly concerned with, and we can make other applications of it for ourselves.

And who does not see that this principle carries with it very solemn and startling consequences? How it upsets and reverses all judgments formed by outward appearances, and teaches us to look down beneath all those exterior conformings, and fair proprieties, and smooth disguises, which have such a goodly show, and discloses to us, perhaps even in what may pass for the best deeds we perform,[1] evil motives, secretly, steadily, and for years

[1] "Nous aurions souvent honte de nos plus belles actions, si le monde voyait tous les motifs qui les produissent." — *Rochefoucault.*

at work, which, though they may give no visible sign of their existence, do yet in the end spread more canker and corruption than almost any violent act of passion and guilt.

Who can freely bare his bosom to such a test? who can boldly abide such an inquisition? Yet this is the rule which Jesus sets up, and by which, as he has assured us, they who have committed no evil act may meet a heavier doom than those guilty of deeds before which we stand appalled.

Yes, and we can partly see even now, short-sighted and deceived as we are, how this may be true. Acts of violence and crime, though they startle and shock us, do not always imply deep depravity. They may sometimes plead in extenuation the force of sudden provocation, a fit of resistless passion, an impulse of want, of fear, or of despair, a strange juncture of temptations too great, perhaps, for human weakness to encounter, overtaking one hastily, and hardly leaving a moment for deliberation and thought.

And then when the dreadful deed is done, there may be a revulsion of moral sensibility, a consciousness of guilt, a depth of penitence, which show that the soul of the wrong-doer is not corrupt all through. He does not love the act he performed. He repudiates and loathes it, and would give anything if it could be blotted out.

I am not speaking the language of a morbid sympathy for criminals. Human laws which can-

not enter the province of the heart must establish rules of conduct regulated solely by deeds done; nor do I think that in this age they err on the side of severity; perhaps the danger is the other way. Society whose laws the overtempted and penitent criminal has violated, and whose interests he has endangered, may scorn him, and imprison him, and gibbet him, nor perhaps at present can all this be helped.

But we are looking now to the inner man of such a wrong-doer as is here supposed; and there is at least one eye that regards him hopefully, one heart that feels for him, one friend that is even ready to die for him. It is He who did not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, and who gave words of comfort to the penitent malefactor crucified at his side. This sinner may yet be brought back to virtue and to heaven. His case is not the worst.

Look to another — the case of a man of very decent and fair outward life, but who cherishes one evil motive, desire, purpose, of which the following four things may be said: —

First, it is a matter of free choice. There is no sudden surprise here, no hasty betrayal, no momentary impulse; all this is out of the question. It is something of cool deliberation, of conscious and habitual preference.

Secondly, it is a bosom sin, something loved and hugged by the soul, something which has become

its source of happiness, a part of its own life, so that you can more easily amputate a limb from the man's body, than take that away from his heart.

Thirdly, it does its work little by little, never to startle and alarm, never by any outward act which the world would much condemn, or which would draw his own thoughts to reflect upon what he is about, but deftly fills up its ocean drop by drop, and builds up its mountain sand by sand.

And then, fourthly, it is at its work perpetually, steady as the pulses of the heart, busy as thought, morning and evening and in the wakeful hours of night, through months and years, perhaps from earliest manhood to extremest age.

Can you wonder at anything which that one evil motive or plan may do? In the ultimate extent and might of its work, how evident that it will vastly exceed and outweigh what any one criminal act can effect, more eat out the very life of the soul, make it more hardened, leave it less likely to be recovered to better things, stamping it through and through with deeper guilt, and exposing it to a heavier doom than may finally be laid to many a felon's and murderer's charge.

It is fearful to think what a small indulgence, what a little sin, thus chosen, loved, nursed, and through life retained, may do this great thing. In the bosom of that man whose outward life is all so respectable and comely, there may be a serpent coiled around his heart, stealthy, watchful, restless,

little by little embracing more in its folds, till in the course of years, and at the end of a long life, it has the whole man in its power.

Is there such a serpent at your heart? Search, I pray you, and see. You may have it and never once dream it is there. This is the subtle danger of a bosom sin, that it never startles you, perhaps never once shows itself to your thoughts. Would that it did. Would that it might prompt you to some act which would arouse your attention, and make you aware of your danger, and lead you to probe your heart.

No doubt there are cases where some deed even of great atrocity has been the salvation of the doer. It has arrested and startled, and awed and subdued, and convicted and converted him, when but for this he might have gone on little by little, and in the end had more sin in his soul though it put forth no outward act at all.

Ah, my friends, those words of Jesus in the text put us upon making strange comparisons. I am sure that more could be said in defense of the man who, in the hour of strong temptation, has committed forgery, than could be offered in justification of him who is in the habit of slightly misrepresenting the truth in little things that may turn up to his advantage, and carries that habit with him through the whole of his life.

Who has most sin in his soul, the thief who, tempted by rare chances of impunity, hurried on

by want or despair, or carried away in a moment of reckless infatuation, breaks into your house or office by night, and seizes your hoarded treasure, or the cheater, who in his business will deliberately set about defrauding in little things, and do this day after day and year after year, as the chosen, loved, systematic, and thriving business of his life?

The political rival is not assailed with deadly weapons; but is it a less thing than this if he be hated with an intensity and malignity of passion all the greater for being shut up in the heart, and glossed over by the show of outward propriety and courtesy?

The scholar among his books is safe from the snares and perils of the world of traffic — its double-dealings, its evasions, its fierce and rude struggles for success; but even the scholar may cherish in his retirement a hungry craving for fame, till it has eaten out his whole heart, and stamped him with as much unmitigated selfishness as you can find in the annals of crime.

You point your finger of scorn to the frail one who has fallen from the line of virtue; but take care lest the intensity of that scorn may more poison your soul, than one act has tainted the heart of the wrong-doer whom you so much condemn.

Vows of celibacy, immuring men in monkish cells, did not extirpate human passions; and they,

who outwardly passed for saints, studied the pictures of the Blessed Virgin and the Holy Angels in their illuminated Prayer-books, only to kindle the flames of lust.

I yield to no one in my abhorrence of the sin of intemperance ; but how much of our zeal against this vice springs from the fact that its effects are so visible and marked ? Sure I am that this is not the worst form of sensualism in this age. There is another sin that puts forth no external marks, does not palsy the powers of the mind, perhaps quickens them, but only to bring them all under a more perfect thralldom ; and it has its thousand victims where strong drink has one.

It is the idolatry of wealth, the worship of mammon, the devotion of everything to gain — that intense selfishness, which, indulged, confirmed, and hardened as steel through many years, is a death and ruin of soul, more general, more appalling, more hopeless, than the bodily ruin by strong drink.

" Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you whosoever is angry with his brother, without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment ; and whosoever shall treat his brother as a worthless creature, or shall cast him off as an apostate wretch, he shall be in danger of hell-fire."

If we apply the principle that underlies these

words to our own times, to our own dangers, to our own hearts, it must fill us with a just dread. God is not misled by these outward shows that so much deceive us. The greatest sinners He beholds are not those to whose charge the greatest crimes are laid. They may be men who have a fair standing in the world, and have put forth their hands to no evil acts; yet the publicans and harlots may enter the kingdom of heaven before them.

Such is the secret and subtle power of sin. And until we look deeper than our outward life, until we enter the inner chambers of the heart, and see what it is that we keep and cherish there, how can we tell, though we may stand ever so fair before the world, but that our final doom may be more awful than that of many whose memories have perished through infamy and crime? Think you that these were sinners above all men? I tell you nay. Their one act of guilt, terrible though it was, may not so deeply condemn them, as a long, careless, self-indulgent life may condemn us.

SERMON XIII.

ANODYNES.

"Yet they say the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." — PSALM xciv. 7.

A GLIMPSE of the true state of our hearts may lead us to cast about for something to quiet our apprehensions; and the text suggests two ways by which men do this.

One is by supposing that human actions and states of feeling are things too small for God to see; the other is by believing them to be, in their moral complexion, too indifferent for God to regard. Thus we grow bold and careless upon the presumption either of his oversight or of his indulgence.

It is the same danger in our relation to the Divine parent which, as we all know, exists with every youth in his relation to the earthly parent. For nothing is more common, and nothing is more fatal for a child to say, My father, in his many cares, will not see this little offense; or if he sees it, he is too complacent to reprove it.

We impute to God the imperfections of man, and repeat in our maturity the excuses which we learned in our youth.

It may be of some use to see that these excuses are nugatory, founded on misconceptions of God's character, allying themselves to some of the most fatal weaknesses of our hearts, softening and silencing the remonstrances of conscience, encouraging us along a downward path of peril, in which we can be arrested only by the considerate and careful, strict and stringent conviction, that the Lord does see, the God of Jacob does regard it.

And, in relation to the first point, that God is too great to notice small things, ought we not rather to say that He notices them because He is so great, that to his infinite capacities "no high, no low, no great, no small appears," for He comprehends them all alike; that the terms *vast* and *minute* have reference only to our way of judging things; and that the child's hope of impunity in small offenses springs from the fact that his father is not great enough to pay attention to those first slight transgressions, which yet may be the most serious and momentous of all?

Perhaps we all have noticed, in the case of an earthly father, that the more vigorous and comprehensive is his mind, and the more tender and fervent is his parental affection, the more solicitude does he feel to guard against the earliest small beginnings of disobedience. That is to say, perfection in the parental relation is marked, not by any disposition to overlook little things, but by a condescension and care which takes even these into

account, which explains the principle that underlies them, points out the danger of proceeding step by step to larger offenses, and thus insists upon a degree of attention to the earliest fountains of wrong, and a searching watchfulness in regard to them, which oftentimes makes a child wonder why his father will be so scrupulous and precise.

And mark the reason for this minute care which we, who are parents, have so frequently given to our children. How often have we told them, and told them truly, that it is no proof that an act is of trifling importance because it seems so to them; that the motive with which it is done invests the smallest deed with a character of its own; and that the rapidity with which we go from less to greater, and the ease with which we slide into habits, attach a quite inconceivable interest to the first wandering of our feet, the first wavering of our will. How often has a wise parent thus tried to correct his child's haste, heedlessness, his contempt for little things, and to brace his mind up to that more watchful virtue which keeps its careful eye on every act he performs.

These considerations which we have so often suggested to our children, do we not see with what force they apply to ourselves as children of the Great Father above? And when we are tempted to feel of some slight act of disobedience, of some wrong motive rising within, that this is too little for God to notice, let us remember that it is no

proof that it is little because it seems so to us. Trifling as it may appear, yet regarded as the first step of a path that may conduct far astray in peril and woe, what interests of years and ages may be suspended on that little step! It is a proof of the perfection of the Divine mind, seeing all things from the beginning to the end, to notice that act with a degree of attention far above what we accord to it; and this may be one of our most pressing spiritual needs to brace up our own minds to that same vigilant and stringent virtue, which will permit no moral act whatever to be beneath our regard.

And, therefore, while there may be something almost ludicrous in the contrast between the greatness of God on the one hand, and the insignificance of some little deed we perform on the other hand, — while we may feel, of a conscious wrong we commit in a petty case, that really this is too trifling an act for the mighty Sovereign of the universe to stoop to notice, — while we feel so, may it not be that the absurdity of this contrast is seen only at our point of view, that it arises from a defect in our moral perspective, and that could we see this act with the eye of Him who takes in all its consequences at a glance, we should perceive that no event of our lives was more momentous than the deed which, at the time, we regarded as too insignificant for any serious thought?

Who can doubt that the time will come when

we shall look back upon what we have done in this world with far different feelings from those which we now cherish; and enlightened by that vision by which we shall see even as we are seen, how shall we behold a full and broad stream of consequences flowing from some small beginning, just as on a map we trace back some mighty river to an obscure spring on the mountain side. In like manner, in that first conscious wrong, we may see the fountain of those bitter waters, which, increasing little by little, became a strong and prevailing current of life, too mighty for any strength we thereafter had to resist, and sweeping on perhaps through ages of our existence.

May we not then feel like exclaiming, How could I have been so stupid and insensate! How could I have played around those first fountains of evil, and regarded them as too insignificant to claim a moment's attention! As I knew that God's inspection extended, like that of a perfect father, to my slightest wandering from right, and that He who numbers the hairs of my head marks also the thoughts of my heart, how could I have deluded myself with the idea that these things were too little for Him to notice, and emboldened myself by saying, the Lord shall not see.

I am sure that the possibility of this self-reproach ought to plead with us for a more careful and strict attention to duty, even in little things. No points in which are involved questions of right and wrong,

of innocence and guilt, are too petty for our considerate thought, since they are not too insignificant for the notice even of Almighty God. If by no special exercise of his power in each individual case, at least by the mysterious laws of our nature, every act of disobedience, however slight it may be, leaves its marks and scars upon the soul, — marks and scars by which He who reads the heart may at all times know us, so that there is not a thought of our mind "but lo, O God, thou knowest it altogether."

But I turn now to consider the other flattering unction we apply to the heart, which is, that if God be not too great to notice small things, He is at least too indulgent to remember them against us, so that if we cannot say the Lord shall not see, we may say, the God of Jacob will not regard it.

Nothing is easier than to speak of the boundless goodness of God. Partly through our inability to take in the full idea of an infinite being, and partly from an instinctive inclination to aggrandize that attribute of which we feel we have most need, certain it is that the compassion and tenderness of God are the grounds of a large reliance; and to hear some persons talk one might suppose that the Deity had no other attribute but that of pure benevolence.

And then this benevolence, see how it shows itself in the case of an earthly father, distinguished for nothing so much as his tenderness and affection,

in whom benevolence soon comes to be synonymous with an easy indulgence that encourages almost any hope of impunity. After the image of such an earthly father as that do men often construct their idea of the great Father in heaven. Their own one-sidedness and weakness they impute to God, and in the midst of their transgressions they say that He, the tender and indulgent parent, the God of Jacob, will not regard them.

But what right have we to take such freedom? What right to dwell only on one attribute of the Divine character, and to make exaggerated representations of that? What right to forget that God's benevolence acts in harmony with his truth and justice, with a forethought that regards the sinner's ultimate good, with a firmness that can steadily inflict suffering until the softening effects of punishment are wrought out, and with a holiness that cannot look on any sin with pleasure?

In God's control of this outward world of nature may we not see his *style of government*, if I may so call it; and learn how a being always consistent with Himself, will conduct the discipline of the moral world also?

Let us look to some illustrations.

God has been benevolent in the adaptation of man's physical system to the fair fruits of the earth, offered in such rich abundance for food. Suppose one should say, God will not punish so small a thing as a change in my diet, and I will

feed on poison. Is it with an easy indulgence that this act is met? Does the Divine benevolence intervene to work a miracle in man's nature, to adapt it to this new food, and to save it from approaching suffering and death? These consequences, coming with unerring certainty, prove that God has laws which He will have respected, and has firmness enough to hold the transgressor to a punishment, endured to the last moment of his chosen and persistent folly.

Again, God has kindly instituted certain relations between the density of our bodies and that of the earth; but suppose one should say, "God will not notice so trifling a thing as my throwing myself from this tower," and with these words casts himself headlong below. Is the law of gravitation suspended in his behalf? Is he arrested midway in his fall? Does he alight so easily that not one of his bones is broken, — not one of his muscles bruised? Quite on the other hand, either instant death, or years of suffering, proves that the Divine laws cannot be trifled with, and that their Administrator has firmness enough to hold the infatuated offender to his just punishment, though it wrings out to him an inconceivable amount of suffering and woe.

It is by such comparisons as these that we may see what I have called the style of God's government, and may understand that, gentle, tender, compassionate, indulgent, as the Infinite Father

may be, none of these names, nor all of them, describe the whole of his character. He has other attributes, too, — truth, justice, holiness, firmness; and if such be his discipline in temporary, perishing things, can we think it will be less consistent, less firm, in the interests of the soul?

And so, finally, the truth is, we may as well expect health and long life if we feed on poison, as expect the least indulgence to violations of God's moral will. Throw yourself from a precipice and meet no harm, and then you may palter with guilt and meet no retribution. In the very laws of our nature God has linked sin and sorrow together, and we have neither the power to repeal those laws, nor the art to evade them. It may be for the moment a soothing anodyne to the soul, but is it not trifling with death and eternity to say, "The Lord shall not see, the God of Jacob shall not regard it."

SERMON XIV.

VOWS.

"I will pay my vows unto the Lord." — Ps. cxvi. 14.

Among the many rites which the Roman Catholic Church borrowed from the old pagan worship, was that of presenting votive offerings to places consecrated to devotion.

If at any time before the birth of Christ one entered a pagan temple, at Athens or Rome, he saw not only the image before which the devout prostrated themselves, and the smoke of the incense ascending in clouds before it, but all around the shrine he would observe the gifts of these worshippers, some laid at the feet of the idol, some hanging on the wall at its side. Wreaths of flowers, little bronze or silver images, jewels, statues, pictures, were the offerings, varying according to the means and taste of the giver.

You know what idea was at the bottom of all this. It was part of a worship which throughout had an object of sense to represent an emotion of the heart. Men then had not abstract terms, nor abstract ideas. They were in such bondage to materialism that they must have something which

they could see and handle to stand for everything they felt; and the invisible idea was made a reality only through its visible representative.

Thus God was a reality only by means of the idol. The ascent of prayers to heaven was a reality only by means of the incense. Holy resolutions were realities only by means of the votive offerings.

In the childhood of our race these outward objects were precisely what a little girl's doll, or a little boy's toy-horse, is to childhood still, giving an objective reality to rising feelings incapable as yet of being abstractly grasped and stated. Idolatry had its necessary place, its beneficent uses; and as long as men are incapable of anything better we should excuse it in them, as God excused it, for, as St. Paul said in his speech at Athens, "the times of this ignorance God winked at."

The Roman Catholic Church adopted a great many of these pagan forms; or rather it would be a better statement to say that these pagan forms survived, and adapted themselves to Christian usage. Who can think this was strange? The great body of the first converts to Christianity were as ignorant as their heathen ancestors. They were equally incapable of abstract ideas. They just as much needed an object of sense to express a feeling of the heart. Hence the Roman Catholic Church had images to verify the idea of spiritual beings, and incense to verify the ascent of prayers,

and votive offerings to verify holy resolutions and vows.

Votive offerings are not so common in the worship of that Church at the present day, as the other things I have named; but in the older and less educated countries of that communion one will find these offerings still presented. All through Italy, in the great cathedrals, at the tombs of renowned men, at the shrines of saints, before the image of the Virgin, you may see thousands of these gifts, marking some solemn event or crisis in the giver's life. A wreath of evergreen, a silver cross, a silver heart, a crucifix, a burning lamp, are the most common; while a chapel, resplendent with gold and marble, or a costly statue, or a magnificent painting, attest the devotion of the more wealthy.

Consider the meaning of these objects. Each is the witness of a vow. A solemn resolution has been formed in some thoughtful hour, and its memorial is there in the church. It gives an objective reality to that inward purpose. There is the record, the witness, and monument of it. Every time the giver enters the church his eye is attracted to it, and the saint to whom the votive offering is given is himself made, as it were, a party to this solemn transaction of the soul. It is the language of a symbol; it is a record by a fact; it is the will expressed by a deed.

It is easy to curl the lip of scorn, and to pro-

nounce all these votive offerings the fruit of superstition; but a thoughtful man will be more disposed to see in each one of them the hint of some burning and bleeding heart in a solemn hour it has met, and of some blessing, perchance, which a holy resolution has brought to the soul.

But we live in times very different from those old pagan, and from later semi-Christianized days. We have dispensed with the language of symbols. We do not need objects of sense to enable us to grasp ideas. We can seize hold of ideas directly, and keep hold of them, and make them present and living realities, without the intervention of visible representations. So at least we say.

We enter the place of worship. There is no image there of the God we adore. We can see Him in our minds. We think it would be degrading and sensualizing the image of Him stamped on our souls were we to give it any outward representation. So we say. But who does not see that if to us the church be but an empty space, a hollow shrine, if there be to us no God there, no majestic and Divine presence before which the soul bows, then we are not so true and devout worshippers as those who knelt sincerely before the idol which their hands had carved.

No smoke of incense ascends to the arches of this church. We do not need the sight of it. We can grasp the idea of prayer without this symbol. We can believe that the emotions and longings of

the soul go up to God, if no ascending vision appeals to the eye. So we say. But who does not see that if our prayers are only words, words that bear up nothing, no faith, no gratitude, no aspiration, then we are not so true worshippers as those ignorant and simple men whose souls were lifted up on the curling clouds of incense.

So likewise we have no votive offerings. We do not need any such outward symbols and memorials. With us a vow can be wholly mental. We can call God to witness our heart and our will without any visible sign of these inward acts. So we say. But who does not see that if there be no holy resolution at all, if we pass solemn events and serious crises without any settled purpose, without any sacred vow, then we are not so true to our souls as were those simple-minded worshippers who hung up a sprig of evergreen, or lighted a bit of candle, as an expression and memorial of their will.

"I will pay my vows unto the Lord," said the Psalmist in the words of my text. The explanation I have given of these words has been to little purpose if we do not see that the main thing is to have a holy resolution, a fixed purpose of the will, a sacred, solemn vow. The form it takes is of little consequence, whether attested by an outward symbol, or known only in the deep places of the heart. But all through the Bible, all through pagan and Christian experience, all through the

lives of good men, all the world over, and in all ages, we find proofs of the necessity of marking the thoughtful hours of our life by holy resolves.

Apart from this testimony, do we not ourselves see the high uses which our vows may subserve? Let us name some of these uses.

There are solemn hours that come to us all. A quickened vision of our inner man, the recurrence of a birthday, recovery from a sickness, the anniversary of a death, the beginning of a new year, the meeting of old friends the sight of whom tells us how fast our life is passing away, — such are some of these hours. At these times we seem to see clearer who and where we are. The lulling dream of life is for a moment broken. An unwonted light, as if from some celestial opening, shines down about us. If it be but for a moment, who does not know that it is a precious moment, and may have more influence upon our career than months, perhaps years, of our ordinary experience. A holy resolve seizes the wisdom of that moment, fixes it in shape, turns it to account, and enables us to carry the light, caught on the topmost hills, down into all the valleys and lanes in which we must walk. Who can doubt that it was in some such crisis that the Psalmist said, "I will pay my vows unto the Lord?"

Again, if we reflect a moment I think we shall be surprised to see how much our life is shaped by sheer accidents. We float with the current. The

daily turning up of events, our feelings at the time, the little grooves in our inclinations which habits have formed, the wishes and caprices of others, what we find easiest and pleasantest to do when the case comes, — such are the petty things that shape our course. A holy resolution, wisely formed and by God's grace faithfully kept, is like seizing the helm of the ship, which is no longer the sport of chance currents and waves, but is now directed by the great purposes of the voyage, and by the stars of heaven. Did not the patriarch see this when he said, "I will pay my vows unto the Lord?"

Moreover, it is not the least recommendation of the habit of forming solemn resolves that it serves to educate the will. How defective is any system of self-training if, while it provides for the culture of the judgment, the memory, the attention, the affections, it leaves out the very essence of personality, the will, which most makes and marks the man. The reason why great men have so often risen from humble circumstances is that these circumstances forced them to educate the will; and here too is the reason why we commonly find failure with those who, brought up in the lap of ease and self-indulgence, have subjected their will to no discipline.

Hence the Roman Catholic Church has insisted so much, and with a wisdom which we do not always appreciate, upon the practice of fasts, and

mortifications, and penances. We perhaps see no merit in living on a crust of brown bread, or wearing a hair shirt; nor is there any use in these things considered in themselves. But the power over one's will hereby gained is of the very highest worth; and it is that power which Jesus referred to, and sought to secure, when he said that whosoever will come after him must deny himself and take up his cross.

Power over your will, to have force in yourself, to be able to do what you know to be right, to fashion yourself and not be fashioned, chameleon-like, by everything that surrounds you — this is what will be given you by forming and keeping holy resolutions; and for this also the Psalmist said, "I will pay my vows unto the Lord."

And, finally, he said it for another object, that he might have a plan for his life. What is a vow but — as far as it goes — a plan of life?

But how few of us have a plan of life? We have plans for everything else. If you would build a house you have a plan. If you would lay out your grounds you have a plan. If you would make a machine, or cut out a garment, or start on a journey, you have a plan. How can it be that in the greatest of all concerns, that of our life, we can reach any high end if we live only at haphazard, and to secure the result for which everything else was given us, we have no plan? Let us ponder these things, and pay our vows unto the Lord.

SERMON XV.

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS.

"When I am weak then am I strong." — 2 Cor. xii. 10.

We often express great truths in the form of a paradox. Thus we say we are never less alone than when alone; that the wisest man is he who knows that he knows nothing; that the carnal minded man is dead while he lives. In all these cases we detect at once the truth intended, and the form of expression acts as a mental stimulus.

The inspiration of the sacred writers, whatever it was, did not lift them out of their own modes of utterance. It left them free to choose their figures of speech; and therefore they sometimes expressed themselves in the form referred to, as it is natural and suggestive.

But suggestive of what? Is there a communication between our souls and the Soul of our souls? Is there an omnipotent Parent mind behind our finite intelligence? Is there a helping Spirit ready to flow into our hearts when we unbar the doors to let it in? Is there an Almighty Strength to supplement our weakness?

But why can we have that strength only when

we are weak? Because in all cases we seek aid aright only when we feel that we need it. It is this sense of need that not only makes us long for help, but makes us susceptible of receiving it. Our trust in our own wisdom and strength, shuts out that Good Spirit that comes only into the lowly and broken heart.

Thus it is literally true that when we are weak in ourselves, then are we strong in God. When we knock away the props of self-help, then we feel the almighty props of God's help. When we come renouncing our own will, and lie before Him, saying, "Do Lord with me as seemeth good in thy sight," then He takes us up, bleeding and broken though we may be, and puts his own infinite and omnipotent grace into us.

Come and tell me, my Christian friend, have you not found it so? I will answer for you, happy if I can here and there drop my little plummet into depths of spiritual experience, where you have found a strength which was not your own, and have felt a peace that the world knoweth not of.

Who has not at times found himself environed with perplexities that have baffled his struggles to see his way clear? Turn where we will, our path is hedged in with difficulties. We seek the advice of friends, but their counsels are contradictory. We consult the lights of experience, but they are like lanterns in the stern of a ship that cast no ray on the breakers ahead. We try the strength of

our logic, which is so good to justify steps already taken, but who ever knew it to discover the right way? We look to our common sense, the great instincts of the right and the good, but how do we know that some interested bias has not deflected them all, and, like an unknown current at sea, is bearing us away from our true course? We feel helpless, and yet the exigency is pressing, and we must decide.

In that utter irresolution and weakness, you have gone into your closet, and lifted up your soul to Him who seeth in secret, and, conscious of your need of guidance, have asked light and strength. The sense of his presence has awed all self-interest and self-trust. That personal abnegation has opened your soul to a wisdom from above. A light has broke in upon your mind. The way is smoothed before you. Difficulties vanish. You come to a decision and go on in a strength of safety and success. You experience the fulfillment of the words that a good man's ways are ordered by the Lord. "The meek He will guide in judgment; the meek He will teach his way;" and so it is that when you are weak then are you strong.

Perhaps you have had some trying duty to perform, some office to discharge, some service to render, that will expose you to the obloquy of friends, to the spite of enemies; something which comes athwart all your cherished feelings, and requires of you a power of will which you think it is im-

possible for you to command. The duty, the summons stands before you, and you must meet it, though it seems as if you can as soon lift up a mountain, and cast it into the sea.

In that sense of your weakness you seek Him whose strength is made perfect in your weakness; and how can you describe that new spirit that takes possession of you, that fortitude, that courage, that determination to bear up under anything, except by exclaiming, "I can do all things through Him who strengtheneth me. And yet not I, but the grace of God that is in me; for when I am weak, then am I strong."

Perhaps the currents of your religious life have run low. You do not take that satisfaction in spiritual things which you have felt. You are sliding down on an inclined plane of a mere outward and worldly life, and are losing the fervor of a walk with God, and of a conversation which is in heaven. You sit down to think upon your state. It fills you with dread. And yet you ask, How can I help it? How can I command the airs of heaven to swell the sails of my idle bark? How can I send through my soul that life which alone can meet my wants, and without which I feed on husks?

In that emptiness and poverty you think of the words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," that is, they who have a sense of their inward poverty, "for they shall be filled." You intercede for that

spirit that helpeth our infirmities. In your reliance on that grace which is sufficient for you, you are lifted up to a higher plane, and breathe a higher life. God comes to you, and dwells in you, and you in Him; and so you find again, that when you are weak, then are you strong.

Perhaps you are called to meet the loss by death of those you most fondly love. The separation is before you. The sands of life are fast running out, and you must bid adieu to father or mother, to brother or sister, to husband or wife. You feel as if it is too much for you to bear, that your heart will be crushed under this heavy load, and in your agony you ask, Where can I find my stay and support?

Ah, in that sense of the need of a stay and support comes the only true succor. It leads to Him who has said that your strength shall be proportioned to your day, "When you pass through the waters I will be with you, and the floods shall not overwhelm you." You have met the trial with a peace that has surprised yourself, because when you are weak, then you are strong.

I am sure that you needed not these illustrations to show the essential truth implied in the text, that man finds his wisdom and strength only in recognizing and reverencing a power mightier than himself. It is so even with inferior animals. Naturalists have observed how much they are improved by their domesticity with man if they look

up to him as a protector and benefactor.[1] It was the recommendation of a wise man that we should choose a friend from a family where has lived one whom all have reverenced; for it is in this attitude of humility and respect that sweet and holy virtues find their best nutriment. And how much such an attitude influences the growth of the mind, also, may be seen by one historical parallel.

A hundred years ago there lived in France a philosopher, renowned for learning and wit, who, in his self-sufficiency, thought he had seen quite through the designs of Jesus of Nazareth. "Crush the wretch," was his impious expression; while he predicted that in fifty years Christian truths and influences would disappear from the world. I name these facts merely to show, on one point at least, the preoccupation and imbecility of his mind.

Contemporaneous with him was an English philosopher, of vast reach of intellect, humbly exploring the laws of Nature, feeling, as he expressed himself, that he was a child walking on the shore of a boundless ocean, who had picked up one little pebble, and even that could not fully comprehend.

[1] "Take an example of a dog, and mark what a generosity and courage he will put on when he finds himself maintained by a man, who to him is instead of a god or *melior natura*. Which courage is manifestly such as that creature, without that confidence in a better nature than his own, could never attain. So man, when he resteth and assureth himself upon Divine protection and favor, gathereth a peace and faith which human nature in itself could not obtain." — *Lord Bacon.*

Who doubts which of these two men, Voltaire or Sir Isaac Newton, stood in the attitude of greatness and success? Who doubts which mind the Spirit of all wisdom and truth would enter, and feed with grand thoughts, and make it the vehicle of a divine illumination, and consecrate it to be a light and a blessing to the world?

If from science we turn to poetry, we see the same point we are now considering. What strains might Byron have sung had he looked up to something higher than his own morbid self? Byron's career is explained by another great master of song, the hiding of whose power was in his perception of the truth that greatness comes from humble reverence, and who said, —

> "Unless above himself he can
> Erect himself, how mean is man!"

So of poets long before Wordsworth or Byron. Who doubts where the inspiration of Milton or Dante came from, and does not see that it was from near visions of something infinite and holy, abasing to nothingness their own personality, but at the same time lifting them up to heights where mortals never before or since have trod?

In the world of art we find illustrations of the same point. I am not one of those who exalt what are called the Ages of Faith, believing those better than the times in which we live. And yet our age, in its wonderful material development and prosperity, has almost deified man, as if his arm

and strength have wrought out all this success. How our natures are impoverished, deprived of those sublime conceptions of God which lift up and inspire the soul, which reared the sublime cathedrals that modern art can only copy but cannot equal, and which gave to the marble and canvas forms of beauty that have been for ages the unapproached types of excellence. Some of the temples, paintings, and statues of former days are in art what the bones of the mastodon and megatherium are in palæontology — proofs of the existence of a race compared with which we now see only pigmies.

I suppose I express the feelings of most visitors to Rome when I refer so sorrowfully to the general state of modern art, to its stale repetition of old conceptions and forms, to its want of freshness and originality, its lack of lofty visions of beauty and inspiration. And who does not know the reason? It is the religious element alone, the soul upturned to the Infinite, that stamps art with immortality. Art is not religious because produced in a Christian age, nor as an expression of a so-called religious object. It is the tone of mind of the artist that gives the crowning perfection; and when we read that Phidias began his daily labors with an offering to the gods, and gave such a deeply religious impress to his works that it was said he must have visited heaven and seen the gods themselves, we find the explanation both of his renowned suc-

cess, and of so many failures in an age of hollow unbeliefs. A new day for art will come only when a new tide of religious life shall again lift up the hearts of the world, and we shall look Godward and not manward, and, emptied of our imitations and conceits, we shall be filled with a new sense of God's infinite beauty and love.

Nor must I omit to allude to the confirmations of my subject suggested by the lives of inspired men. What enabled Abraham and Moses to do deeds that have floated down to us over the waves of three thousand years, and which will never die out from the records of man, if not because, though feeble in themselves, they walked with God, and had his Almighty Spirit within them, and his Almighty arm at their side? Where did David and Isaiah drink in the inspiration that has embalmed their words in the undying affections of mankind, if not at "Siloa's brook that flowed fast by the oracle of God?" The goodly fellowship of the apostles, the noble army of the martyrs, why were they, who were the sport of every power of the world, superior to all, if not because "greater was He that was with them than he that was with the world?"

I have been lately on that famed Appian Way, in Rome, along which St. Paul went as he entered that city where he wrote the words of the text. I tried to imagine the look of disdainful strength which he cast upon all the proud works which

then adorned the capital of the world. Why did he feel so? Because he knew that though helpless himself, and treated as the offscouring of the earth, God had chosen weak things to confound the things that are mighty, and things that are not to put to naught the things that are, and the words of Paul the prisoner would endure long after all the power of the Cæsars had crumbled to ruin.

How often in the history of the world it seems as if that good Spirit that helps our infirmities loves not what are called the great places and the great men of the times, but "before all temples prefers the upright heart and pure," amid the trials of private life. What illumination it gave to the humble home of Bethany, and to the woman of Samaria at the well, but had no revelation to make to the proud priests at Jerusalem, decked out in their costly robes and sparkling Urim and Thummim.

We have just received accounts of the opening of the great Council of the Romish Church, when a thousand mitred prelates, in splendid vestments, led by the Pope, effulgent in gold, filed in long procession beneath the lofty arches of St. Peter's. I am sure I hope they will have the Spirit of God given them, for they must need it in the mighty crisis on which their Church has fallen, — that Church which "has reversed the deed of Christ; for as he vivified a stone into the Apostleship, so

this has petrified the Apostleship into a stone of stumbling." [1]

But it would be like other facts in the history of man if that Spirit should be repelled rather than invited by all those gorgeous ceremonies, and meanwhile be ministering its heavenly illumination and strength in ten thousand homes of want and sorrow: to some humble and devout thinker in his wretched garret; to the impoverished father, struggling cheerily to support a large dependent family; to the poor seamstress plying her needle day and night, in gentle patience and faith, to lift the burden of debt from aged parents, or to smooth their passage to the grave.

To each one of us, however lowly and suffering our lot may be, is that help offered. And the exhortation of our subject comes to us in the words of the familiar hymn: —

> Man's wisdom is to seek
> His strength in God alone;
> And e'en an angel would be weak
> That trusted in his own.

Live close to Him. Have the great thought of Him to awe to humility, and at the same time to inspire with might. Make that resource yours by a life of prayer. Fill your urns at that inexhaustible fountain of living waters, and thus be able to say in doubt and trouble, in perplexity and sorrow, on a sick bed and in the hour of death, — When I am weak then am I strong.

[1] Ruskin.

SERMON XVI.

LIFE.

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity."
ECCLES. xii. 8.

IF we turn to the history of Solomon, the author of these words, we shall see what were his expectations of human life. Let us read a few lines from his autobiography: "I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards; I got me servants and maidens; I got me men singers and women singers; I gathered me silver and gold; I sought in my heart to give myself unto wine; I said I will prove thee with mirth and pleasure. But the wise man dieth as the fool. All are of the dust. Therefore I hated all my labor because I should leave it unto the man that should be after me. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

A deathless and sensual paradise was what Solomon wanted. It is not strange that with such expectations the world was vanity to him, nor that the world will be vanity to every one that is like him. And who can regret that it should be?

But what we must regret is that it is so often

thought that this lamentation of the text ought to be accepted by all; — as if the example of Solomon was not given for our warning; as if God can be pleased by the perpetual confession of our disappointment and complaint; as if it were not impiety to despise or disparage the condition which God judges best for us, and sullen ingratitude to be always whimpering and mourning that life is not different from what it is.

So far as Solomon is concerned something may be said in extenuation of his view of the case. He lived before immortality had been brought to light in the Gospel. In all his writings there is not, I believe, a single hint of a future state. His sad complaint of the vanity of life seems like a blind longing for something better; the protest of a great nature dimly conscious of wants and aspirations which cannot be satisfied, and in comparison with which the best gifts of time and sense seemed contemptible. That outlook of disappointment and almost of scorn which he cast over the world is excusable in him. His words have a melancholy cadence not unsuited to the time in which his lot was cast.

But we who are Christians, to whom a continued and unending life has been revealed, can we do nothing but repeat those Old Testament dirges? Ought not our words to be set to the music of hope and joy?

The three circumstances, which perhaps more

than all others prompt the exclamation of the text, are, the brevity of human life, the instability of human possessions, and the unsatisfactoriness of human enjoyments. Let us look at each of these from a Christian stand-point, and see if it be right that they should reflect upon life an appearance of vanity.

First, the brevity of human life. No doubt it would seem short were it four or five times longer than it is, because any fixed period must appear brief in contrast with that indefinite duration of which we so easily conceive. To the divine mind, as we are told, a thousand years are as one day; and were we, in a prolonged earthly existence, habituated to measure extended periods of time, they might seem so to us. We are to look at the duration of life, not through our imagination, but in the light of those probable reasons which have fixed the bounds of our habitation on earth.

Is life long enough considered with reference to the divine plan of introducing upon the stage of existence the greatest possible number of generations? Is life long enough as the primary school of humanity? Is life long enough to include as many duties and responsibilities as any thoughtful man would have intrusted to his charge?

If we cannot answer these questions, they may at least suggest some higher relations of the subject, and show that life is to be measured by something else than mere duration.

I was reading not long since the life of one of the English poets of the last generation, a pure and noble name in English literature, whose biographer had visited the old Hall, the scene of his literary labors, and who says, to quote the writer's words: "What an impression it gave me of the vanity of human life to walk through apartments which for forty years had been cheered by his genius, and find his place occupied by strangers."

It might be unfair to criticize words so incidentally used, adopted as they probably were without thought, as one of the modes of expression so frequently quoted from the Bible. And yet this is precisely the thing to be blamed, that we unthinkingly repeat from mouth to mouth what is neither just nor true. Forty years of a pure and useful life to awaken associations of vanity! The gentle duties there discharged, the holy hopes there inspired, the undying affections there confirmed for forty years, were these to be called to mind as vanity? Or is it vanity that he, the subject of all these, is now taken up into a higher school, and others are coming, in indefinite successions of forty years, to have the same precious seed-time of enjoyment and opportunity?

Say what we will, such language, if it means anything, is morbid and mawkish; and instead of an impression of vanity, there should have been awakened in the place referred to, thoughts of the reality and blessedness of human life and hopes.

Perhaps the strangest thing is that these contemptuous allusions to life should be thought to be peculiarly devout and Christian. And yet, after all, this is not more unaccountable than other things which have sought the shelter of those names. Men have believed that all life in the body is through the agency of some demoniac power, to be subdued only by mutilating and scourging. They have held that the merciful appointment of death is a penal infliction for the sin of the first parents of our race. Indeed, it is in harmony with these views that men aggrandize expressions that give us low and mean thoughts of the duration and significance of this present life.

But how can we repeat such expressions in the presence of Him who took upon himself our nature as if on purpose to show us what a holy and blessed thing may be even a few years of earthly existence; who for a little while held the dear relations of this world to give us an idea how precious they may become; whose teachings invest with high associations the opportunities and trusts of our earthly lot; and who reveals to us how benignant is that voice, heard when it may be, which says to us, "Come up higher"?

In the second place, there is the instability of human possessions, that continual fluctuation alluded to by the expression of the Liturgy which laments that we are "never in one stay," and under which he who to-day feels that his mountain stands firm

and shall never be moved, may to-morrow find all his glittering hopes dashed to the dust. Should this inspire the feeling of vanity?

Doubtless we can all conceive of a condition less mutable, in which human calculation should not be so frequently at fault, and plans frustrated, and ties broken off, and possessions lost, a condition in which life should wear a more tranquil and assured aspect; and the complaint may easily arise by the contrast between the billows on which we are tossed and the calm peace of that ideal repose.

Still the question remains, Do we here apply to life the right test? By what is its character to be judged, — by its conformity to what we may *desire*, or its conformity to what we may *need?* And if we see inactivity and rust corrupt those whose lot is most unchanged; if we know that we all require a motive to watchfulness, and a spur to put us up to our best exertions, so that perhaps of all arrangements of the world it is this insecurity which most develops and intensifies life; with what justice may we call that aspect of our condition empty and delusive, in which the wisdom and benignity of God are so clearly seen?

As a part, moreover, of our religious discipline, who can fail to see how much is contributed by that uncertainty and instability to which we refer, how much it breaks up a worldly confidence which is the slumber of the soul, how much it leads us to feel our dependence on a divine power, how

much it forces us to find our true repose not on the broken and breaking reeds of the world, but in the unshaken and unshaking trust of the soul? "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world;" and where can the soul's good cheer be found but by a like victory over change and trial.

These words of Jesus show that it is possible, amid all the mutabilities of the world, to have good cheer; nor is there anything in which his followers have been more false to him than in not obeying this injunction. The things which are designed to strengthen our faith and courage, ought we to call them vanity? Rather are they not our needed and beneficent teachers? Well indeed might an unchanging world be called vanity of vanities if it lulled us to sleep, or made us blind to our true peace and joy.

We come then to the third thing named as sometimes prompting the exclamation of the text, which is the unsatisfactoriness of all earthly enjoyments; for no one of them, as all human experience bears witness, perfectly fills our capacity of joy. Even our highest satisfactions leave a void from which comes the echo that elsewhere there is something deeper and better than they; while as to far the larger part of our pleasures we feel that they are not worthy to be compared with that perfect felicity of which we can conceive.

Perfect felicity! This then is our standard of

judgment, as if the condition of this world, or the nature of man, were intended to yield such a thing. It is true, we form a conception of it, and that conception is one of the noblest prophecies we have; it is a proof that this world is not an end in itself; it is something that shows our adaptedness to a higher life than this, just as the wing of the unfledged bird shows that its organization fits it to fly.

But why condemn the present because it does not bring that which is possible only in the future? Least of all, why speak disdainfully of a thousand lowly satisfactions, proofs of God's goodness, and calls to our gratitude, although they may fall far short of a standard which we have no right to apply to the things of this world? How evident that the degree of unsatisfactoriness will be measured by the degree of our expectations, and that therefore a confession that the world is vanity is a verdict against ourselves?

Finally, we may see that the chief reason why we say "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," is, that God has made our nature larger than the world. It is through the greatness of what we conceive that we learn to underrate what we have. No prolonging of life, no greater security in our state, no intenser satisfaction in our enjoyments, can prevent this, because we have aspirations and hopes which nothing short of infinity can fill.

It is an easy thing and a cheap thing to find

fault, to send out a look of disappointment and contempt like that scowl of the preacher of old which has been seen by a hundred generations; but this, wise man though he was called, was not wise in him, nor will it be grateful and Christian in us. Rather would we learn to circumscribe our expectations within the limits of our condition, and thankfully use the present world as not abusing it, — its endeared ties, its holy duties, its precious trusts, assured that a cheerful faithfulness in that which is least will be our best preparation for that which is much.

SERMON XVII.

THE ANCHOR.

"Which hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast." — HEBREWS vi. 19.

No mariner puts off all thoughts of his anchor till the storm comes. What a time to begin to provide that on a lee shore, amid the howling tempest, and when all will go to pieces at the first touch of the rocks! Forged before the voyage began, placed in the forepart of the ship, never permitted to be overlaid or entangled by other things, kept always under the eye, and ready for any emergency, the anchor is a first necessity, and the navigator that neglects it would be called insane.

The similitude of the text warrants a use of these facts to illustrate spiritual things. The hope of a continued and unending life is an anchor to the soul. We see that it was forged for man before he began the voyage of life, in this instinctive looking for another scene of being, in the universal conviction of the present incompleteness of the moral government of the world, in the innate consciousness of capacities which, for their full devel-

opment, demand a longer term of existence than that assigned on earth.

But how differently we may treat it! It may be overlooked, out of place, covered up by the goods we are carrying along with us, and so incapable of use in the perils we at any time may meet; or it may be placed, where it belongs, in the foremost part of our plans, kept under our eye, unincumbered by other things, an element of trust, something sure and steadfast amid the dangers where many are suffering shipwreck.

In looking to the office assigned to our hope of a life to come, we need not fall into a common exaggeration, as if this was intended to occupy all the thoughts of the life that now is, or to unfit us for one of this world's duties, or to throw into a contemptible perspective any of its proper occupations and enjoyments. There is such a thing as too much other-worldliness. There are those who, like the crazed ones of whom we read in the Gospels, have their dwelling in the tombs. A religious literature, abounding in images of death, is in singular contrast with the spirit of the sacred writers, whose minds were glowing with the great thought of life, and whose motives are drawn, not so much from the fact that we are to die, as from the other fact, that we are to live forever.

So does God speak to us in our nature. The great prompting of the soul is to fill the hour with what is really best for it, being held there, and

steadied there by that hope of something greater to which faithfulness in the present may lead. We will remember the figure of the text: hope is the anchor; but the anchor is not the ship, still less is it the voyage.

But it is the security of the ship, and the success of the voyage; and being such, it may be thought strange that in the original constitution of our nature the hope of a future life is not stronger than we generally find it to be. When we speak of it as something given to us in the outfit of our voyage, we all see that such language applies only to a rudiment. That hope first dawns in a child's mind only as a faint glimmer of probability. In how many human beings is it hardly even that! Why is this left to be so much the work of our negligent hands? Into the bark of human life why is it not placed ready for its best use at once, — a thing completed from the first?

Those who ask these questions would do well to consider that there is nothing in man to which this language can apply; that is to say, there is nothing that is completed from the first. Look to the lowest range of man's capacities, those which belong to him as an animal, — his sight, his strength, dexterity in the use of his limbs, skill in avoiding danger or overcoming obstacles, — everything begins as a rudiment, having its first exercise in feebleness, and growing by training.

The same thing is true of the first dawnings of

intellect, memory, judgment, reflection; they all appear at first only as rudiments, and are the growth of culture. Some of man's highest capabilities are not born in him till maturer periods of life, and in some men are hardly born at all; such as the power of abstract conception, the play of imagination, first appearing only as rudiments, and attaining strength only by culture.

In like manner if we ascend to the crown of manhood, the spiritual nature of man, consciousness of an alliance with higher Beings, a sense of dependence on a divine power, a perception of the duty of knowing and obeying the Author of our existence, nothing but rudiments are these in their first exercise, and if they have any growth it is only by training. Indeed, the definition of a man is that he is a creature who only through his own struggles comes in possession of himself; so that it was not without reason said that God did not create man by one act, but is creating him as long as man lives, and permits man to share the glory of creation, by making him in part self-creating. And if man obtains his sight, the muscles of his arm, his memory, his judgment, his idea of God, only by a process of training, why should it be thought strange that the hope of a future life should begin as a feeble rudiment, and its growth be dependent upon culture?

But it may be asked, How does all this comport with the language of the text? A dim, uncertain

hope, attaining any considerable strength only by time and painstaking, with what propriety may this be called an anchor, for this means something formed, solid, and ponderous, and of no use when it does not take a strong hold?

And to this, two considerations may be suggested in reply.

First, the strong hold which a hope takes upon the mind depends upon the amount of thought we give to it, and not upon its degree of certainty. Indeed, some degree of uncertainty may even favor that strong hold. We see a familiar illustration in the case of wealth. If a young man knows that when he comes to be fifty years old he shall have a large estate, the thought of wealth will not take so strong a hold upon his mind as will a possible hope of that event. Certainty would beget indifference, while even a faint hope calls forth effort, quickens enterprise, wakes him early in the morning, employs him late at night, holds him to his plans, his industry, his prudence, his caution, and by keeping and steadying his mind hope is here an anchor.

In this point of view, there may be moral advantages in the vague and shadowy form in which the expectation of a life to come dawns upon the mind, thus keeping the old problem ever open and fresh, stimulating inquiry, putting the mind on the scent of every collateral confirmation, and investing the subject with that solemn mystery before which all at times stand awed and hushed.

Especially may all this seem suited to the spiritual trial of free-choosing beings, testing our willingness to think upon this subject, our self-control in keeping it before our minds, our moral gravitation toward it, our docility in heeding not the whirlwind and the earthquake only, but also the still small voice. Where there is no faith through a lack of these moral qualities, it would be quite vain to expect faith by any mere increase of evidence; and they who were willfully deaf to Moses and the Prophets, would have no willingness to believe though one should rise from the dead.

Thus we see that a dim hope just as much tests and proves a man's heart, as would a more luminous hope, and may just as much steady and anchor his mind.

Some men seem to fancy that they may dismiss all concern about a future life because its existence is not proved. But reflection must teach them that doubts do not justify indifference. Doubt is a state of mind in regard to a point for which there is *some* evidence; for if there were no evidence at all there would be no doubt. We may call this evidence hope on its positive side, or doubt on its negative side; still it is evidence that means something, and means enough in the case of a future life to lead every man to treat this subject with tenderness and awe.

I would even say a word in behalf of that *minimum* faith which is all that some men will acknowl-

edge. Perhaps it seems too much for them to affirm a hope of an immortal existence, for that may carry a claim which they do not mean to set up, or emphasize an expectation beyond what they may feel. But the other form of expressing their case they will adopt, saying that they are not free from a doubt in regard to a future life, for this language may be the more truthful description of their mind.

If it be so, do they see to what a high office their very doubt may minister? Is it an honest doubt, born not of heedlessness but of serious and earnest thought? Does it live in no atmosphere of sneer and scorn, but amid aspirations for what is noble and divine? Have they pondered it in thoughtful and holy hours, in connection with the solemn experiences of life, accumulating around it all such lights of study and reflection as they can command? Has it been a doubt therefore which has kept their mind open and inquiring, lifted up their heart to what is pure, and trained their will to be prepared for the possibility which their doubt itself admits?

See then what their doubt has done for them. It has kept their soul, and steadied their soul. They may even alter the words of the text, and say, "Which *doubt* we have as an anchor to the soul." So true is it that the hold which a hope has upon the mind depends, as I have said, upon

the attention we give to it, and not upon its degree of certainty.

The other consideration which diminishes our surprise that the hope of a life to come should be at first so weak is, that the growth of that hope, or, what is the same thing, the growth of its influence over us, is just as surely, and just as much, the result of attention and culture, as intellectual power is the result of proper mental discipline. Perhaps it would not be easy to find a man, leading a good life, and habitually reflecting upon his origin, duty, and probable destiny, who does not see the evidence of a future existence grow brighter the longer he lives. It is perpetually gathering to itself fresh confirmations, just as Columbus, before he reached the shore of the New World, was more and more confident he was nearing it, through many indications of drift, and sky, and birds, and spicy breezes.

Of how many countless homes is this assured hope the light and joy, and has been in all Christian ages! By what a blessed ordination does the human heart, even under rude moral training, mature and mellow to the conviction of a life beyond the grave? Who can think of the millions who in every generation have laid down in death, soothed and blessed with this hope, without feeling that its action is by a sort of law, as benignant as the growth of our bodies, or the expansion of our minds?

It is no doubt true that there are multitudes around us who are utterly heedless of this hope. But what of that? There are multitudes around us, likewise, in absolute mental darkness; but this does not prove that they have not in them the germ of a high, intellectual power, which only needs the proper training to bring it out. We see that we are now living in the childhood of our race. God's plans will unfold themselves not till maturer epochs of humanity, when all shall be educated, both for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. But we must see, also, that our unconcern about a future life does not spring from God's neglect to place that anchor in the soul, but comes from our neglect in permitting that anchor to be encumbered and covered up by other things.

We come back, therefore, to the point with which we began; no mariner puts off all thoughts of his anchor till the storm comes. Who does not want to feel now the holding power of that great hope? What sense of safety will it give us as we sail over smooth seas, and with favoring gales; and without it, how can we meet those lowering tempests by which, this very night, our bark may be stranded?

We may see in Rome the monumental inscriptions of the early Christians, who died in the Catacombs in the old times of persecution. A favorite emblem with them was the anchor, symbol at

once of their tempestuous lot, and of the calm trust with which it was borne. Over many a grave it was rudely but triumphantly cut in stone, by hurried hands, eighteen hundred years ago. They rode out the storm, and are now in their haven of rest; and the anchor which was sufficient for them, shall it not be our safety and joy?

Come, then, hope of heaven, anchor of my soul tossed on these restless billows, fitted by the Divine hand into my bounding bark, come, minister to my safety and peace. In all my holy hours I will have my eye on this hope, and give it something of that love which I feel for dear ones gone before, but from whom I know even death will not sunder me. This hope shall shine brighter and brighter to the perfect day; this anchor amid all the storms of life shall be sure and steadfast.

SERMON XVIII.

REJOICE ALWAYS.

"Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice." — PHILIPPIANS iv. 4.

"AH, it is easier to say these words," some may exclaim, "than to obey them. Very pleasant, no doubt, it is to rejoice sometimes, when the world goes well with us. But how is it possible to rejoice *always?* How can we rejoice in our misfortunes and disappointments, in our sicknesses and sorrows, in that burden of anxiety and care that weighs down like lead, in the dark problems of existence, the mysterious shadows of wrong and of sin. Who was this Apostle Paul, and what was his position in life, that he could enjoin so strange a thing that we should rejoice always? And then, as if he suspected that we might doubt whether he was in earnest, he took pains to repeat his injunction, 'Again I say, rejoice.'"

I do not think we shall find much that will enable us to explain away the force of these words, as if it was easier for him than for us to rejoice, if we consider ever so carefully St. Paul's position in life. On the other hand we may find what will only increase our surprise.

It could not very much have encouraged the Apostle to rejoice, the fact that he was then a prisoner at Rome, with a capital charge resting on his head, and liable at any moment to lose his head, — an event which actually happened not long after writing the words of the text.

Those were not exactly rejoicing times, when such men as Nero sat on the throne, and men of Paul's way of thinking were thrown as food to the wild beasts of the amphitheatre. Compared with those days, these in which we live would have seemed to the Apostle as the very paradise of heaven, and he would have thought it a thousandfold easier to rejoice now than then.

Why speak of sickness and disappointment, to which he was exposed equally with other men, when all these minor evils were not accounted anything by the side of the giant sufferings that cast their shadow on his lot?

But, it may be said, Paul was a man of enthusiastic temperament, who went through everything with a high-strained feeling, braving it out the best that he could; and his words are to be understood, as some may think, rather as showing the appearance he meant to put on, than as indicating what he actually felt.

Of course, there can be no doubt that this Apostle was a man of warm feelings, and as little doubt is there that in all cases our spirits are affected by our natural temperament. But to re-

solve the whole duty of keeping a rejoicing spirit into a matter of temperament is to overlook what runs like a thread of fire through all the Apostle's writings. He would convert natural temper into Christian duty. He would mature emotion into principle. He would discipline a flashing rapture into a calm, abiding joy. This is what he aimed at in the words of the text.

Perhaps one reason why it seems so difficult to obey these words is, that we do not take into account the previous training that is necessary. Almost every great achievement seems impossible when we look only at the finished result. But we bring it within the sphere of a probable, perhaps of an easy accomplishment, when we follow it through the several steps by which it was reached.

If you sit in your parlor holding your little son, three or four years old, in your lap, reading to him some beautiful story out of the Bible, about Joseph and his brethren, or the Shepherds of Bethlehem, perhaps you close the volume, and say, "Ah, my boy, you must read these sweet words yourself."

But what must he do before he can obey you? He must learn his letters, and how to put them into words, and the meaning of words, and the construction of sentences, and get much experience to invest those sentences with the life which your voice and manner give to them. You indicated the result; but what a process of training is

necessary for that result? It may be that your little son may think that you require an impossibility of him, that he can never find those charming stories in the black characters of the printed page. But if he takes the right steps he will find them there; and those right steps consist in a process of preparatory training.

So is it in the case before us. We can foster a calm and habitual joy if we take the right steps. If we will work one great truth into our mind and heart, into our daily thoughts, into our familiar and assured trusts, into our tender and grateful emotions, and make our will obedient to it, this one point will sweep away all the difficulties before us. The words of the text will no longer have an air of surprise, as betokening an impossibility, but will seem to indicate what will then be the spontaneous temper of our heart.

And that truth is no other than the simple one that God is our Father. The paternal character of God, the central and grandest truth of the Gospel, what a foundation does it lay for undisturbed peace and joy? It is for this reason that the Apostle tells us to rejoice *in the Lord*. It will be quite vain to think of finding this rejoicing anywhere else. But it may be found here. There have been those who have been so penetrated and permeated with this truth that they always felt the peace and joy of a child in its father's arms; and why can it not be so with us?

Ah, who of us does not know the answer? We have not made the fatherhood of God a reality to us. Instead of coming to the embrace of his paternal arms, we have stood at a distance from Him, been forgetful of Him, and been more intent upon our own little schemes than upon his will. Perhaps we have done worse, and allowed some wrong indulgence to build up a wall of suspicion and fear between Him and us.

Here is the chief foe of all joy. You may remember in what words that great dramatic poet, who looked so deeply into the human heart, describes the effect of our first sin: —

> "Not poppy, nor mandragora,
> Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
> Shall ever medicine you to that sweet sleep
> Which you had yesterday."

But if we keep a good conscience, if we take as much pains to work this one truth, that God is our father, into our habitual thoughts and deepest affections, take as much pains to do this as a little child takes to learn to read, or as we take to become skilled in any science or art, does any man doubt that we may lay the foundation of a peace and joy which the world cannot take away?

Let us take courage by marking how great this joy has been with thousands and thousands, even in want and suffering, in sickness and sorrow. How great it was with the early Apostles, who, in persecution, bonds, and imprisonment, made

their dungeons echo with hymns of praise! The first preaching of the gospel, in the midst of a gloomy and sullen world, was an outburst of ringing joy. How great that joy may be with us when we say, "Come, dear Father, God, I am thy child, thy loving child. Even in my trials thou dealest with me as with sons. Thy watchful eyes are on me; thy blessing arms are around me; and let what will befall me, in Thee I can rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

But instead of such a Father, our mechanical philosophy has too often substituted an insensate, cast-iron, cog-and-wheel idol, whom we call, "Laws of Nature." What a blessing if we could root out from our minds and from our language all vestiges of that dualism, God and Nature, which, flowing in from a heathen fountain, has so long, in many ways, corrupted the stream of Christian thought. Its worst effect has been to thrust in something between our hearts and Him who, as the old Greek historian expressed it, "before the first dawn marked out the path of the rising sun,"[1] and has prevented our childlike confidence and love reposing on "Him first, Him last, Him midst, and without end." Why need we fear anything if we can always feel that it is in the embrace of the arms of an Almighty Father that we live, and move, and have our being?

I am not so blind to the facts of human nature

[1] Προς ἠῶ τε και ἡλίου ανατολὰς εποιέετο τὴν ὁδόν. — *Herodotus.*

and the experience of life as to suppose that even this truth of the fatherhood of God can make men insensible to disappointment and loss, to bereavement and suffering. And it is no stoical indifference that our blessed religion inculcates. Of course tears will come when our cherished plans are defeated, and our dearest friends are taken away. But even then, down underneath the surface, is a trust and peace that the world knows not of, just as in the open well, into which have been thrown stones and sticks and dead leaves, there is, unseen at the bottom, cool and sparkling water which none of these disturbing causes have driven away.

How infinitely soothing the reflection that under our Father's eye nothing can come to us through accident or chance; that the plan of our life is all marked out by Him who numbers the hairs of our head, and that the events of the world, so often enigmatical to us, are ordered by a system that shall one day be seen to be founded in infinite wisdom and love. "If I go to sea," said a noble old heathen writer, "I am not fretting myself about the position of the sails and the movement of the ropes. I know nothing about these things, and quietly I leave them all to the commander of the ship. — And shall we not peacefully trust Him who is at the helm of the universe?"

This peaceful trust which even a pagan author enjoined, should it not be an element of a Christian's joy?

All the wealth of the greatest money-monger in the world cannot do so much for our happiness.

When men say that the existence of sin in the world gives a perpetual gloom to their spirits, and the thought of the doom of hereafter, so awful for many, casts before them the shadow of dismay, let us tell them that they do not understand this matter at all. Under the reign of a heavenly Father it is all coming out right and good. Somehow or other He will make even sin to praise Him, and probably He has not created one of his children to whom existence will not on the whole be a blessing. Rejoice rather in that love which will in time blot out all evil, just as the sun dries up the muddy pools of the street.

Some may say, again, that the frequent contrasts in the conditions of life naturally sadden the heart; and how can it be otherwise, they may ask, when we see riches and pleasures fall to the lot of the least deserving, and poverty and suffering attend the steps of virtue? But who can feel that riches and pleasures are the fitting reward of virtue? Who does not see that these cheap things are bestowed seemingly at random, as if on purpose to show how lightly God esteems them? Who can doubt that He has something infinitely higher in store as the reward of great price in his sight? Ought not the thought of that bliss, which will by and by crown the deserving, span with a bow of hope and joy all the inequalities of life?

I have read a Rabbinical legend which has some pertinency here. The wise Akèbà was on a journey, accompanied by three learned doctors of the law. As they approached a remote city they heard sounds of tumultuous festivity; upon which the doctors wept aloud, but Akèbà smiled. "Why do you smile?" they asked. "Why do you weep?" he inquired in reply. "We weep at the mournful contrast," they said. "This pagan city, where every day the name of God is blasphemed, and incense is burned to idols, is filled with exultation, while our loved Jerusalem, and the Temple where Jehovah was worshipped, have been burned to ashes. And you smile!" "Yes," replied Akèbà. "Exactly for this do I smile in hope and faith. For if God has been so liberal of his gifts to his enemies, how great must be the blessings which He has in store for his friends!"

I often think of the simple saying of an old man whom I once knew, and who, in the serene temper and cheerful spirits in which I always found him in his little cottage at the foot of the hill, seemed to be the happiest man in the world. At every adverse event he would say, "Well, it is for the best, else it would not be."

Can we not make the philosophy and the religion of that saying enter more deeply into our souls? What if we should try it for two years, for one year; yea, for six months, thoughtfully and devoutly say, whenever anything goes against us, "Well, it is for the best, else it would not be."

Finally, to all other inducements to the cultivation of a rejoicing spirit, I think this may be added, that nothing that we can give can be more acceptable to God. No doubt, if we judge what religion is by the temper of many so-called religious men, we may well suppose it to be a religion of sorrow, whose yoke is galling, and its burden heavy, and may call gloom godliness, and a disfigured countenance Christian piety. But to walk through life desponding and sad, seems a homage to the Evil One, not a service to the Father. A rejoicing heart is a perpetual hymn of praise. I can imagine nothing upon which the Supreme Being may be supposed to look down with more pleasure than upon his children, happy in the thought of Him, his presence, his providence, his all-guiding and all-blessing love, without which not even a sparrow falls to the ground.

And especially must it be pleasing to Him to see that the adverse events of life, sent to try them and prove them, and thus often blessings in disguise, do not destroy their cheerful spirits ; that if troubled on every side they are not distressed, and if perplexed they are not in despair. Who can forget those sweet words of Jesus, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer." Whatever happens, be of good cheer ; and let the Apostle's words come to us freighted with that full intensity of meaning he gave to them when he said, "Rejoice always ; and again I say, rejoice."

SERMON XIX.

TWO SIDES TO DEATH.

"This mortal put on immortality." — 1 CORINTHIANS xv. 53.

How little can we know what death is till we see it on both sides, — the side of the immortal, as well as the side of the mortal!

In this world, we see it only on this side; and it is the side of weakness and decline, of separation and tears, of the shroud and the grave. In the other world, we shall see it on the other side: the side of immortal vigor, and blissful greetings, and triumphant and undying joy.

The mortal side of death is the wrong side; the immortal side is the right side. The design and plan are there developed, completed, forever held up to view; and what false judgments must we necessarily make till that immortal side be seen.

We can comprehend this only through the aid of illustrations drawn from nature or art; and in them bereaved hearts have often found solace and hope. Let me give a few words to the description of an illustration of this kind, which seems to me to have some significance.

Among the objects of interest which visitors to the French capital usually go to see is, what is

called, the Gobelins Manufactory, which gives employment to several hundred in making the large tapestry with which apartments were formerly hung. It takes its name, I believe, from a celebrated manufacturer who carried on the business centuries ago, before the modern fashion of finishing apartments by plastering and papering had driven tapestry from general use. But the palaces of kings, the castles and chateaus of nobles, sometimes still retain the old hangings, which give an air of antiquity and princely grandeur to their homes.

To such perfection was the art carried that memorable scenes are represented with a fineness of execution, a brilliancy of coloring, and a power of withstanding injury, that made tapestry rival the most costly paintings of the world. The establishment I allude to is a monopoly of the French government; and if hangings for the walls of a single room cost many thousand dollars, the distinction of having them is only made the greater.

Admitted into an immense apartment, you see the warp of many pieces, twenty or thirty feet long, set up perpendicularly. The workman is seated on the wrong side of the tapestry, and you go up to see what he is doing. You observe nothing in the work of drawing threads through the tight lines of the warp to pay for his sitting there week after week, and in some cases for many years. You see nothing but broken ends. You detect no meaning in the design. It suggests to you nothing

but toil, care, weariness, thrown away, reaping no reward, bringing forth no value, ending only in disappointment and loss.

So you think, judging by what you there see. But the workman sees more than you. His mind is fixed on a plan. He is continually considering how his work will look when viewed from the other side. Every day's toil, every thoughtful care, every broken end, has reference to a design, an attitude, and coloring, that will stand admired forever.

Come round now to the other side of his work, and the whole will be explained to you at a glance. Here is the result to which all before pointed, and to which all that care and labor were directed. Here it is, in the rounded form, the speaking gesture, the brilliant color, in the starting into life of some scene of immortal interest — the marriage solemnity, the stately procession, the high debate, the glorious combat, the flush of victory — a picture of living, unfading beauty, to adorn a regal hall.

I have given more words to this description than I intended; but such is the illustration I had in my mind. Let me now take up one or two points which it suggests.

That first view of the work I have described is like the present view of death. Seen from this world, death appears a mystery, something ending in weariness, disappointment, and loss, a tangled

fretted skein of broken ends. The unbeliever, the skeptic, the mere man of the world, the carnal eye, sees nothing but this. Indifference, insensibility, neglect, a habit of looking at things only in their vulgar associations, and of sneering at all generous and upward instincts of the soul, seem in time to cut men off from the possibility of reaching any higher conclusion, and entertaining any higher hope.

It is not the least argument in favor of a religious life, that when death comes into our household we have something else to think of beside this wrong side of death. We can admit the possibility that there is another side, and draw comfort and hope from that belief; and thus in the darkest passages, and the most crushing bereavements, can have a stay and support which the worldling knows nothing of.

If in this wide world there be anybody to be pitied, it is he who, when he finds the dearest objects of his heart taken from him, is bewildered and amazed, sinks down with nothing to rest his foot upon, because he looks upon this side of death as the only side, and has never sent one careful thought beyond, nor lighted up one bright hope to cheer the grave.

> "Alas for him who never sees
> The stars shine through his cypress-trees!
> Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
> Nor looks to see the breaking day
> Across the mournful marbles play!

Who hath not learned in hours of faith,
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That life is ever lord of death,
And love can never lose its own." [1]

Contrast with him the composure, dignity, greatness, the resources, the spiritual wealth and consolation of the man who looks calmly beyond this side of death to the other side, and who, in the triumph of his faith, can say, "We know if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God eternal in the heavens. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in his temple, and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them or any heat; and God shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

In the work of art to which I have alluded, the workman, seated on the wrong side of the picture, has his mind all the while intent upon the result that will appear on the right side; and here I think we may find another suggestive truth. There is a divine workman on this side of death; but all that he does has reference to results that will appear only when we see death on the other side. It is because we do not see the design in his mind that the operations of his hand are now a mystery to us. But he sees it, and works after it, and all that he does furthers it.

[1] Whittier.

Every weakness, and languishing, and wasting away, and pain, of the dying; and every alternate hope and fear of the surviving; every night of watching, every anguish of bereavement, every tear shed at the last struggle, every shudder at the open grave, all have their purpose; all shall work some new grace, some divine beauty, into the final result to be unfolded on the other side, where we shall feel that it is worth all the suffering we have endured.

What a comfort to believe this! And here again we mark the supporting power of Christian faith. If I believe that all these bitter experiences of my life are not without their meaning and use, that they have reference to something hereafter, something which they will work out infinitely better than I can now conceive of, what a motive here is to patience, and resignation, and trust, and courage! Under the inspiration of this faith, how have men cheerfully suffered the loss of all things, and counted not their lives dear unto them, and met whatever God was pleased to put upon them with the smile of triumph and joy.

Why should they not so meet it? And why should not we so meet it? Why should we defraud ourselves of the strongest stay and sweetest solace of this world, — our trust that even our afflictions may work out for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory, if we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

And this brings me to the last point suggested by the illustration which I have described. What revelations will be made to us when, in God's time, we pass on to see death on the right side, the side of the immortal!

But in the thought of that hour, how are all our anticipations hushed to silence by the assurance that "eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." Here, as in other things also, we must wait the great teacher, Death. It is but a little while and we shall know as we are known; and all that was before dark, mysterious, and fearful, shall be explained. Every tie that has been severed, every tear that has been shed, every secret anguish of the soul, shall bring out God's great design in colors of immortal light and unfading beauty.

And the thing which in the future life we shall most wonder at perhaps will be that we so misunderstood death, so feared it, so called it an awful power, and king of terrors, and so mourned when those we loved passed upwards. We shall see it as God's kind boon to his children, the unfolding of his designs, the explanation of mysteries, the disclosure of immortal beauty, the birth of unfading vigor, the gentle laying aside of the perishable so that nothing but life may remain.

In the Museo Pio-Clementino, in the Vatican

at Rome, is a marble sarcophagus, made before the Christian era, of exquisite workmanship, on the sides of which is represented the departed spirit, in the form of a beautiful youth, contemplating the earthly body it has just left. An air of ineffable repose, such as only the finest Greek art knew how to portray, attests the joy of the emancipated soul. It is grateful to know that a conviction of that coming joy was felt even in those early ages; but how much more real and vital should it be to Christian faith than it was to pagan art?

Finally, let us mark how that conviction may grow stronger and stronger the longer we live. Amid all the fresh hopes of youth, and in the pressure of the business of the world, we may not look upon death as the blessing which we described it to be. Nor was it designed that we then should. It would unfit us for the duties of this present life. Accordingly we have an instinctive dread of death as long as it is intended we shall live; but when the time of our departure approaches, if we have led a good life, and have often pondered our great hopes and destiny, that dread is mercifully taken away. A willingness to go is the common result.

Physicians of long experience have often borne witness to this fact. On a sick and dying bed there is for the most part a calm resignation, and a cheerful acquiescence in the Divine will; and it often leaves a smile of triumph on the marble face.

It is as if the soul had some glimpse of that other side of death even before its splendors are fully revealed to sight. "It is all well," "O, how beautiful," "Joy, joy," "No, I would not live longer," — such have frequently been the exclamations of those who are held up, comforted, enraptured with the faith that this mortal puts on immortality.

SERMON XX.

MEMORY IN HEAVEN.

"Call to remembrance the former days." — HEBREWS x. 32.

BY a law of our nature we are perpetually turning to the past. The longer we live the more do we think of the past. How dear to every man is the place of his birth! How he loves to revisit it, and to call up the images and associations that there come thronging to his mind! The further he is removed from it in distance, as well as in time, the dearer it becomes. If we had been taken years ago to the other side of the globe, and had there passed a large portion of our life, how many times should we send our thoughts over seas and continents to the dear natal home!

When men arrive at old age they live almost altogether in the past. Every scene, companion, delight of childhood, recurs to the mind with deeper and deeper power. How intense the desire of the old to die in their native land, that the hills, sun, sky, which filled their eyes with joy long years ago, may now fill their parting vision of earth. If this be denied, they long to have their bodies returned to the place of their birth. "Re-

member — Danvers," were the last words of George Peabody.

It has been often remarked that the second childhood, that of old age, resembles the first childhood, not only in the prevailing temper and tastes, but, also, oftentimes, in the expression of the features; so that there is frequently a striking similarity between the face of the old man and the face he had when a child — the first day, as an old author expresses it, prefiguring the last.[1] Perhaps one explanation of this is that by living so much in the past the mind reproduces, with the scenes and objects of childhood, its thoughts and affections also.

Will this law of our nature which leads us to call to remembrance the former days, still attend us, and be a part of our soul, after we have left this world? From that other life shall we send our thoughts back to this life? Shall we then turn to this planet, the home of our childhood, and gaze upon it with emotions deeper than any words can express, deeper even than we can now conceive?

Who can doubt that it will be so? This great law of memory must be an indestructible part of the soul. The sublime disclosures of the spiritual world will not obliterate the past, nor make us forget it, but will forever reflect new light and new interest upon it.

[1] "Primusque dies dedit extremum.

"No shade can last
In that deep dawn beyond the tomb,
But clean from marge to marge shall bloom
The eternal landscape of the past." [1]

I care not now to refer to the repeated instances in the Scriptures where those who are in the spirit land are represented as still feeling a deep interest in the scenes of earth. I do not need the proof here afforded. I have a higher evidence. The law is written on my soul. I am to retain the same fundamental elements of my nature after death that I have now. These ties which bind me to the past are among the strongest I possess. I cannot doubt that they will forever bind me to the past. When I have left the earth and soared to that other world which may be the scene of my immortal existence, they will there bind me to the past. To this planet, the earth, shining perhaps from my new abode as a star now shines in the firmament of heaven, how shall my eyes, thoughts, affections, turn with emotions faintly represented by those with which the aged now turn to the spot of their birth!

If you go out in a calm night, and, looking up, concentrate your thoughts upon some one planet shining in its brightness and beauty over your head, perhaps you may not find it impossible to imagine that planet to be the place where you first received the precious gift of existence, where your

[1] Tennyson.

infant faculties were awakened into action, where you performed your mortal part of childhood, manhood, and age, where you wove around you the sweet ties of affection, where was the scene of your struggles, disappointments, sorrows, and joys, and where you finally left your mortal body, which was there committed dust to dust.

If by some effort of the imagination you thus suppose yourself to have left the earth, and to be now looking back upon it from your heavenly home, can you not in part anticipate the feelings with which you may call to remembrance the former days? Is it presuming too much to attempt to name some of those feelings, and to try to get a foresight of the action of memory in heaven?

We may well suppose that one of the first feelings with which a disembodied spirit may look down upon the earth will be an unspeakable attachment to this scene of its birthplace into life. Other stars might shine around even more resplendent than this, wheeling swiftly in their mazy dances, and joining in the music of the spheres; but how strongly would our thoughts centre on our natal planet!

There we first opened our eyes on the fair works of God. There we first felt our hearts thrill with the emotions of love. There we received our first perception of the everlasting law of right. There was our first sorrow, our first suffering, our first struggle with temptation, our

first experience of guilt and sin. There we sustained the relations which have yielded such priceless blessings, of son or daughter, of husband or wife, of father or mother. There we toiled on through life's fitful dream, and garnered up that harvest of remembrances — those lessons of wisdom and duty, of obedience and faith, of hope and of trust, or of fears and regrets, of shame and remorse — which has become a part of the inalienable possessions of the soul.

And there, too, on that planet, as the soul may say, I received my deliverance from the body by the event which men call death. It came to me by a sudden surprise, or after a brief illness, or by a gradual decay; and by the side of many loved forms, I left that clay covering which was once the living organs of my will, and there it now is, by the beautiful laws of change, mouldering back to its original dust.

The spot of God's universe — dear mother Earth — endeared to us by all these ties, how could we help looking down upon it with an ever deepening affection? After many cycles of existence we may turn with fresh, thrilling interest to the place where commenced all that we are and have; nor can we conceive that the time will ever come when we shall cease to call fondly to remembrance the former days of our lot there.

Perhaps another feeling with which we may look down upon our mortal abode may be one of

surprise that while we lived there in the flesh we allowed so many things to disturb us. Where are all those troubles now? How many cares which we thought were mountains then have all sunk down into mole-hills now, perhaps even cannot be recalled in our remembrance of the past! How many objects, which we toiled and fretted to reach, were of no substantial worth, — indeed those on which our happiness and well-being were least dependent! How many disappointments under which we then sunk in despair, as if we had met the ruin of all we had to live for, were really designed for our good, and were in the end the best events we ever met! How much we run, and toiled, and struggled, with an anxious, feverish spirit, as if everything depended upon *our* care, or would be decided by the cast of a die, while we were forgetful of that mighty and directing Hand which was over all, and of that calm and undisturbed Providence which was quietly carrying on His own designs, and under which all our restless fretfulness was only impertinence and folly!

In our future life we may say, I can see that all-disposing Providence now; would that I had seen it, and had serenely confided in it then. What an addition to my earthly happiness it would have been had I then felt as a trusting child in its father's arms, and cheerfully left all the allotments of my little day to his infinite wisdom and love!

Shining upon the disembodied spirit as a far distant planet in the firmament, may not the earth be hereafter looked upon with still another emotion? May we not wonder that, while we had our mortal abode upon it, we cherished no higher sense of the purpose for which we were living? We may then say, we see plainly now that our life in the flesh had a divine purpose to accomplish, as the beginning of an immortal career of discipline and progress. What a destiny is suggested by that one word, immortality! It seems as if a child of earth would think of nothing but that. What a joy and triumph it must give him, if he feels it, —

> "And by the vision splendid
> Is on his way attended."

To that divine and undying inheritance did I send forward frequent thought, so as to bring down its supports and inspirations to cheer me then? Ah, how blind to it I was, while I was taken up with petty objects which concerned only that narrow point and brief moment of my existence; and even in my management of these, how little thought had I for those everlasting realities of truth, justice, mercy, and love, which, heeded or unheeded, have left their imperishable mark on the soul? When from my present point of view I look down to my life there in the flesh, it seems as if that life was passed in a dream.

I was like the poor worldling in the old legend who was bent down, raking the ground, while angels were hovering over him, offering him diamonds and crowns if only he would look up. I wonder how I could have been so blind to interests which I now see are as enduring as eternity. Had I the privilege of living that life over again, what different results would I make it bring forth.

Still again, it may be that from our heavenly home we shall look down upon the earth with regret that we did not strive more wisely to make our hearts happy there. We may then see how false and impious it is to say that the mortal life is only a vale of tears, and that man must postpone all expectation of true enjoyment till he leaves this world. We may then see that he who is not fitted to be happy on earth, is not fitted to be happy in heaven. There is the same God there and here, the same laws of conscience and duty, the same elements of internal peace and joy. He who does not have these cannot be happy anywhere, on earth or in heaven; he who does have them may be happy everywhere, on earth or in heaven.

Doubtless, the joys of heaven are fuller, and richer, and so much deeper, that those of earth may be called as nothing in the comparison. Still it is ingratitude to slight or disparage the latter. The good man must find something of a heaven

below, or he cannot find anything of a heaven above. He is not made all over anew the moment he arrives in the spirit land. He is the same being there that he was before. He must have harmony in his soul, or the music of paradise can afford no joy to him ; while if he has that harmony within, some strains of heavenly melody will reach him even on earth.

Looking down from the spirit land upon our mortal abode on earth, may not another feeling be that of wonder that mortals dread death as much as they do? We may see that it is but leaving a perishable body, and why should we so cling to that? We may see that it was but forsaking the fetters and weights of the flesh, and why should we so dread to lay them aside? We may see that all immortality is before us, and why should we so pant and struggle for a few mortal breaths? We see that we carry with us beyond the grave all that we ought truly to prize — our conscious being and identity, all our deep affections, all our pure hopes and longings, all the realities of God and a Saviour, and the love for them which neither life nor death can take away — why should we shrink so much from that short journey, attended by no loss, but bringing an unspeakable gain? From our high view we see it to be only a wise and beneficent change, a new birth from the perishable to the imperishable ; and from that immor-

tal stand-point death may seem, in the strong word of the Apostle, abolished; it is nothing, it is swallowed up of life.

And yet how obvious it must be, let me add in the last place, that all our remembrances of our mortal abode must take their color and character from the kind of lives we led on earth.

I shall not dwell on this thought. Who of us does not feel it? Imagine yourself looking down upon the earth, with quickened remembrances of all your former days, having before your mind at once all that you there have done, the thought of the objects for which you there lived, and of the loves you there cherished, the motives by which you were there governed, and the whole net results of your earthly career. Who does not see that the feelings with which we shall look upon our natal home will be colored by what all these have been?

If conscious that we have spent our mortal life to no good purpose, in vain can we try to shun the remembrance of it, though we exclaim, "O earth, hide my careless and neglectful life. Fall, ye distant mountains, to bury it. Roll, ye waves of ocean, to wash it away." But if our survey of the past gives us assurance that we lived mindful of God, and duty, and heaven, lived amid sweet affections, and kind and beautiful deeds, what tenfold brightness will that thought add to the lustre of that far shining world?

It is in our power now to make that joyful splendor sure. It is in our power now to give that thrilling pleasure to all that future life in which, as long as we retain our conscious being, we shall call to remembrance the former days.

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